DIALOGUES

OF THE

DEAD WITH THE LIVING.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

IF the boldneſs of ſuppoſing converſations held between the Dead and the Living requires an apology, let it be obſerved, that the dialogue of the following pages is intended merely as a vehicle (and I hope not an unpleaſing vehicle) of truth. My fear is, that I have not done juſtice to the Dead or the Living.—To the illuſtrious Dead I am too ſure I have not, whom yet, I flatter myſelf, I have not introduced as ſpeakers in any cauſe unworthy their concern. In regard to the Living, I confeſs I am under (though ſome, yet) leſs apprehenſion of this kind. I muſt, however, apologiſe to theſe Gentlemen for the liberty I have taken with their names. As to the thoughts which I have ſuppoſed them to deliver, there is leſs need of apology; for they

they are, in general, given in the very words of their reſpective works;—and where this is not the caſe, I apprehend that the other ſentiments are fairly deducible from the general air of their writings, and tenor of their reaſonings.

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DIA-

DIALOGUE I.

LORD HERBERT*—MR. HUME†.

LORD HERBERT.

NAY, ſtart not, Mr. Hume; I come with a friendly deſign; and when you are recovered from the emotions which, I ſee, my viſit has thrown you into, I will convince you that my *intents are charitable*; it will be your future care to ſhew that they have been effectual.

* Lord Herbert lived in the reign of James the Firſt: he publiſhed a deiſtical performance, entitled *De Veritate*—the firſt of the kind which formed Deiſm into a regular ſyſtem.

† This and the following Dialogue were written before the death of Mr. Hume.

MR. HUME.

There is a gentleneſs in your manner that encourages me. I ſhall ſoon recollect my ſcattered ſpirits: may I aſk, who it is that honours me with this extraordinary viſit?

LORD HERBERT.

I was once Lord Herbert.

MR. HUME.

Lord Herbert!—I venerate the name—and am very certain, that nothing but the ſurpriſe of your lordſhip's ſudden and unexpected appearance could have prevented my immediately recogniſing a ſpirit ſo congenial to my own. You, my lord, was the founder of a noble plan of Deiſm, on which I have endeavoured to build a firm and durable fabric.

LORD

LORD HERBERT.

You have built, indeed, Sir; but to deſtroy that boaſted building is the chief purpoſe of my preſent viſit. You ſeem diſappointed; but your too ready claim to a ſimilarity of ſpirit with me deſerved, and drew upon you, the retort. Our ſouls, Mr. Hume, were eſſentially different; and if my principles were erroneous, my errors aroſe not from pride, nor did I apprehend their tendency to be ſo fatal as the experience of poſterity has proved them. But your principles are delivered with an air of high ſelf-ſufficiency, which too evidently betrays their ſource; and their tendency is ſo clearly atheiſtical and immoral, that it is impoſſible for you to plead ignorance of their unhappy conſequences. Of my errors I, however, am NOW convinced: happy for you, Sir, if *now* too conviction finds its way to your breaſt! Your future peace is

cloſely connected—more cloſely connected than you imagine—with your preſent conviction.

MR. HUME.

Your lordſhip's obliging earneſtneſs demands my acknowledgments, and induces me to attend to you with readineſs; but if conviction follows your words, I foreſee one diſagreeable effect, of which, perhaps, you are not aware; for, indeed, my Lord—

LORD HERBERT.

Drop, if you pleaſe, that expreſſion of reſpect; for me, Sir, it has now no charms: titles with me were always trifling—now they are inſignificant. But proceed, Sir, to inform me of the diſagreeable effect you was about to mention.

MR. HUME.

I have a ſtrong prejudice (enemy though I be to prejudices in others) in favour of a

ſtate of doubt and uncertainty, which ſtate I chuſe to call *philoſophy*. From this ſtate I wiſh not to be driven: I cannot but ſay, that "the calm, though obſcure, regions "of philoſophy *" are to me more eligible than all the light which the cleareſt reaſoner can throw upon the ſubject of religion.

LORD HERBERT.

You cannot ſurely be ſerious, Sir!

MR. HUME.

Indeed I am perfectly ſerious, and "wiſh "to uphold this deliberate doubt †." It is only "the frailty of human reaſon, and "the irreſiſtible contagion of opinion ‡," that I fear; they, perhaps, may induce me to yield my poſt, and quit, though you ſee how unwillingly, thoſe *calm regions* in which my ſoul delights.

* Hume's Eſſays, vol. ii. p. 485, ad fin.
† Ibid. ‡ Ibid.

LORD HERBERT.

Surely, Sir, your infatuation (for the ſake of human nature I wiſh it) is uncommon: this is indeed a proof, that *men may love darkneſs rather than light.* "Calm "regions of doubt and uncertainty!" As well might the wretched ſailor, while his veſſel is toſſed by the wild and ſtormy waves of the unfathomable ocean, call his ſituation *calm*; and with equal reaſon might he prefer, or pretend to prefer, it to the ſteady ſituation of a ſhip at anchor, and protected from winds and waves by the ſurrounding port.

MR. HUME.

Declamation is not reaſon, nor can ſimilies be allowed to paſs for proofs.

LORD HERBERT.

I grant it, Sir. But you have, I perceive, recovered your ſpirits: I am glad of it;

it; your attention will be more regular, and your judgment more free. In return to your quick reply, I ſhall obſerve to you, that you had eſcaped much juſt cenſure, had you been contented with proofs as weak as ſimilies, nor ſought to puſh your proofs beyond the bounds of *common ſenſe* *. But enough of this: I come at once to the point, and aſſure you, that your grand argument againſt the Chriſtian religion is weak, and unſupported by juſt and ſolid reaſon.

MR. HUME.

My grand argument! Oh illuſtrious ſhade, you amaze me! I never offered any

* I am able to prove, that "except we believe many things "without proof, we can never believe any thing at all; for "that all ſound reaſoning muſt ultimately reſt on the princi-"ples of common ſenſe; that is, on principles intuitively "certain or intuitively probable; and conſequently, that "common ſenſe is the ultimate judge of truth, to which "reaſon muſt continually act in ſubordination."

Beattie on Truth, p. 55.

argument againſt the Chriſtian religion: did I not ever ſpeak of it reſpectfully? did I not call it "our moſt holy religion †?" did I not ever *profeſs* myſelf a friend——

LORD HERBERT.

Yes, and regarded it with the friendſhip of Joab ‡ to Amaſa; with your hand aiming deſtruction, while your looks and words beſpoke amity and peace.

MR, HUME.

I cannot ſufficiently expreſs my aſtoniſhment. What! make a direct attack upon the religion of my country! No; I was not ſo bad a citizen as to raiſe religious confuſion; nor had I ſo little regard to my own ſafety, as to draw upon myſelf the rage of bigotted prieſts by an aſſault upon their craft.

† Hume's Eſſays, vol. ii. p. 146. l. 3.
‡ 2 Sam. chap. xx. 9th and 10th verſes.

LORD

LORD HERBERT.

No ſubterfuges, Sir; with me they will avail you nothing. I allow both your perſonal and your political prudence, and yet inſiſt upon it, that you made a violent (and in *your own opinion* an irreſiſtible) attack upon Chriſtianity: a battery loſes neither its name nor its deſign, for being maſked.

MR. HUME.

I impatiently expect an explanation.

LORD HERBERT.

Your ESSAY ON MIRACLES, then, thoſe grand pillars of the Chriſtian religion, proves your deſign to overturn that religion; and yet the chief argument upon which your reaſoning turns, is, indeed, ſuch as unprejudiced judgment muſt condemn.

MR.

MR. HUME.

Forgive me, if I ſay, that I ſhould be extremely ſurpriſed to hear your ſtrong aſſertion proved.

LORD HERBERT.

I make not the leaſt doubt but you would. The man that can introduce his doctrines with authoritative confidence, will queſtionleſs be aſtoniſhed at hearing thoſe doctrines diſproved. Be aſſured, Sir, however, that there is nothing ſo mean as ſelf-flattery; nor can any method be taken, ſo effectual to render the ſtrength of proof ſuſpicious, as to uſher it in with an air of high ſelf-ſufficiency.

MR. HUME.

There needs no ghoſt come from the grave
To tell us this *.

* Hamlet, Act i. Scene 5.

LORD

LORD HERBERT.

So, indeed, one ſhould imagine; but you, Mr. Hume, ſeemed not to have been ſenſible of this, and to require an *extraordinary* teacher to inculcate it to you, when you prefaced what you had to ſay on the ſubject of Miracles with the following words: "I flatter myſelf that I have diſ-"covered an argument of the like (deci-"ſive) nature, which, *if juſt*, will with "the wiſe and learned be an everlaſting "check to all kinds of ſuperſtitious delu-"ſion, and conſequently will be uſeful ſo "long as the world endures; for ſo long, "I preſume, will the accounts of miracles "and prodigies be found in ALL hiſtory, "ſacred and profane *." It is not, Sir, the affected humility of the words *if juſt*, nor the artful phraſe of *ſuperſtitious deluſion*,

* Eſſay on Miracles, vol. ii. p. 124.

that

that can conceal the arrogance and prophaneneſs of this ſentence; a ſentence too, where not only arrogance and prophaneneſs form a part, but in which nonſenſe has its ſhare---for it is expreſſed in terms of the moſt deſpicable tautology. What! "*all* "hiſtory," Sir---and then "ſacred and "profane!" Was not the ſenſe complete without this addition? But you feared your reader might not think of *the Bible*; and therefore, rather than not point out the immediate object of your aſſault, you choſe to make the ſentence contemptible and abſurd. If you have left in you one ſpark of ſenſibility, it is now, Sir, that it muſt kindle in your boſom.

MR. HUME.

I feel your warm reproof, and acknowledge both its truth and juſtice.

LORD

LORD HERBERT.

It is well, and I forbear to preſs it further upon you: let us now come to the principal purpoſe of my viſit. EXPERIENCE with you is the teſt of truth: nothing that contradicts experience can be true; nothing that is contrary to the common courſe of nature can be admitted as fact. This, Sir, is what you inſiſt upon, and this is your *diſcovery*, is it not?

MR. HUME.

It is.

LORD HERBERT.

You have raiſed a mere phantom to aſſault an armed man. I ſuppoſe, Sir, you would allow it to be a miracle, if the ſun ſhould not ariſe to-morrow till the time in which it ſhould regularly be in the meridian?

MR. HUME.

Moſt certainly, I ſhould.

LORD HERBERT.

And I ſuppoſe you will not allow it to be a miracle, if the ſun * ſhould ariſe at the time in which you regularly expect it?

MR. HUME.

Moſt certainly, I ſhall not.

LORD HERBERT.

And your reaſon, Sir, for allowing the miracle in the former caſe, is, becauſe the appearance would be contrary to the common courſe of nature; and for not allowing it in the latter caſe, is, becauſe the ap-

* "For my own part, I think the riſing and ſetting of the "ſun a more durable argument for religion, than all the con-"vulſions of nature put together."

Archbiſhop Herring to Mr. Duncombe, Letter xlviii. p. 172.

pearance would be according to the common courſe of nature.

MR. HUME.

Thoſe, indeed, would be my reaſons.

LORD HERBERT.

And yet, Sir——

MR. HUME.

Forgive my interruption: but it may prevent much altercation (ſince you condeſcend to argue with me), if I here remind you, that the conſequence of what I have granted and denied is this: That it is utterly *impoſſible* your ſuppoſed miracle can happen, becauſe it contradicts experience; and it is equally certain, your other ſuppoſition *muſt and will* happen, becauſe it coincides with an experience of five thouſand, or, if you will believe the Chineſe, of thirty thouſand years.

LORD

LORD HERBERT.

You might have forborn that oblique reflection at the Moſaic hiſtory; but I paſs it by, and haſten to aſſure you, of what you ſeem not at all aware, that the miracle in both caſes is equally great.

MR. HUME.

How!—What!—Surely my ears deceive me: will you repeat that ſentence?——

LORD HERBERT.

The miracle in both caſes is equally great.

MR. HUME.

Indeed!—and do you aſſert that it is as great a miracle if the ſun riſes at the regular time, as it would be if he were to riſe ſix hours later than that time?

LORD

LORD HERBERT.

That, Sir, is my aſſertion:—and you would allow the truth of it, if you did not fear it would demoliſh your battery of *Experience*. But let me aſk you, was not the riſing of the ſun at the firſt creation of all things a miraculous appearance? Where was Experience* *then*; and where the Courſe

* The ſame thought has, I find, been given by the late ingenious Dr. Ogden, in his Sermons on the Articles of the Chriſtian Faith; and it is delivered in a manner ſo peculiarly animated, and purſued with ſuch ſtrength of reaſon, that I cannot deny myſelf the pleaſure of tranſcribing his words.

"The reſurrection it ſeems was an event ſo ſtrange that no "teſtimony whatever is enough to prove it; the ſtory we may "be ſure is not true, whoever he be that tells it.

"On what foundation, pray, do you build an aſſurance ſo "very abſolute?

"On the foundation of Experience.

"As how?

"I am to tell you then, that we know nothing of the "eſſence of *cauſality*, but found all our aſſent upon *ſimili-* "*tude*.

"I am not ſure that I comprehend you.

"You cannot be poſſeſſed of ſo fine an argument in its "perfection without having recourſe to its firſt inventor (Mr. "Hume). It may ſuffice to let you know in brief, that we

Courſe of Nature? If it was an allowed miracle *then*, it is an equal miracle *now*:—five

"believe always what is moſt *likely*, and call that moſt likely "which moſt reſembles what we have before met with.

"But things often fall out that were not likely.

"Yes: ſo often that we find it in general likely that they "ſhould; and in each particular caſe reflect which of the "two is leſs likely, that the thing ſhould be as it is repre-"ſented, or the reporter repreſent it falſely.

"Have you ever found in the courſe of your Experience, "that any thing was not true which had been as well atteſted "as the reſurrection?

"It was a miracle: Experience therefore, univerſal Expe-rience declares againſt it.

"That of the *five hundred brethren* who ſaw it, was ſure "on the other ſide?

"You muſt appeal to preſent experience: Nature we find "unchangeable.

"Nature! When I diſpute with you about Chriſtianity, I "ſuppoſe that you believe a God.

"You ſuppoſe perhaps too faſt.

"Then I have no farther diſpute with you: I leave you to "other hands. Chriſtianity deſires no other honour than to "be received by every one that is not an Atheiſt.

"Suppoſe there be a God; what then?

"Why then he made the world.

"Well.

"And a multitude of things muſt have been done at that "time of the creation, which are not comprehended within the "preſent Courſe of Nature. Every animal, every vegetable, "muſt have been brought into being at firſt in ſome manner

"of

five thouſand or thirty thouſand years cannot alter the nature of a fact. In *this caſe* then it appears evident, that Experience is nothing; and it muſt be granted, that a fact may poſſibly happen which contradicts Experience, and by conſequence the poſſibility of a miracle muſt be allowed.

MR. HUME.

In *this caſe* it muſt be granted; but ſurely you bring a diſputable point as a certain proof, and argue from the "firſt creation "of all things," as if the hiſtory given by the Jewiſh prophet had eſtabliſhed the truth of it beyond contradiction; but if the world be eternal, what then becomes of——

"of which the world now affords no examples. Of this we "*have no Experience, for we know it to be true; and we need* "*no teſtimony, for we know it muſt have happened.*"

Ogden's Sermons on the Articles of the Chriſtian Faith. Cambridge, 1777. Pages 67, 68, 69, 70.

LORD HERBERT.

Forbear, Mr. Hume, forbear; nor urge as truth what you yourſelf diſbelieve. Fly not in the face of Conſcience, for the ſake of argument. You do not believe the world to be eternal—you know you do not. Shall I (as I can) bring proof from your own words of what I ſay? Will you be "judged out of your own mouth?"

MR. HUME.

Well, we will not dwell upon this point; it is not eſſential to the matter in hand; I have beſides ſomething of greater conſequence to offer againſt what you have advanced, which I flatter myſelf (if you will allow of *ſelf-flattery*) will turn the ſcale in my favour. You have then ſo much adopted the manner of "the diſputer of "this world," as to urge a point, which, if granted you, would *prove too much*; an argument

argument of that nature is on all hands allowed to be as deficient in point of weight, as one that proves *too little*.

LORD HERBERT.

It is ſo.—But be ſo good as to ſhew me how my argument proves too much.

MR. HUME.

What then you have urged will moſt effectually prove, that every the moſt ordinary appearance of Nature is miraculous, and that we are witneſſes of ten thouſand miracles every day. A method of reaſoning, which, by lowering all kinds of appearances down to one ſtandard, will render every thing, and by conſequence nothing, miraculous. This, I apprehend, is proving a great deal too much.

LORD HERBERT.

It is certainly true, that "the moſt ordinary appearances of nature are miraculous;" and it is as true "that we are "witneſſes of ten thouſand miracles every "day." That you, Mr. Hume, live and breathe *, nay, that you hold your pen to contradict what you are yourſelf an undeſigning evidence of, is a fact as miraculous as it is certain; but it does not therefore follow "that nothing is miraculous;" for the ordinary courſe——

MR. HUME.

Excuſe a ſecond interruption: but I in-

* "For my own part, when I conſider how I live; that all "the animal motions neceſſary to my life are independent of "my own will; that my heart beats without my conſent and "direction; that my life is ſupported by methods to which I "am not conſcious; I cannot but look upon the preſervation of "my life in every moment of it, as an equal miracle, and as "great an act of power, as raiſing a dead body from the "grave." Sherlock's Trial of the Witneſſes, p. 66.

treat

treat you to favour me with your definition of a miracle.

LORD HERBERT.

Moſt readily: and perhaps my compliance with your requeſt may ſet the matter in a clearer point of view than a longer train of reaſoning. My definition is ſhort, but ſufficient; *a miracle is an action beyond human power to cauſe or to explain.*

MR. HUME.

Surely you omit an eſſential; you ſhould add †, "and is a violation of the laws of "Nature."

LORD HERBERT.

There can be no occaſion for ſuch an addition, unleſs it be to caſt an obſcurity over the face of truth; for thoſe *very laws of Nature* are in themſelves as fully miraculous

† Vol. ii. p. 128.

as any *violation* of them ever can be. You declare in your Eſſay *, "that nothing "is *eſteemed* miraculous if it ever happen "in the common courſe of Nature." Eſteemed! will you, Mr. Hume, give that as a reaſon why it is not ſo? Does opinion alter the nature of things? A miracle that happens every day, every hour, nay every minute, is no leſs a miracle than that which may happen but once in a thouſand years. I will produce your own inſtance, "† That lead ſhould remain ſuſ"pended in the air is certainly miracu"lous;" and ſo it is that *lead ſhould fall to the ground.* You hear me with a look of aſtoniſhment; but diveſt yourſelf of prejudice, and conſider, Why does a heavy body fall to the ground? You are too much of a philoſopher to tell me, it does becauſe it does; which in effect you would ſay, if you

* Vol. ii. p. 129. † Ibid.

attributed

attributed it to the force of gravity or attraction; ſpecious terms! which proud reaſon has invented to hide its ignorance: no, the thing itſelf is an evident miracle; as much a miracle as if the body were to remain ſuſpended, or to riſe, in the air; only the one is common and ſeen every day, the other is not ſo; the one is according to, the other varies from, the ordinary courſe of Nature, but BOTH are equally miraculous, and both *beyond the power of human nature to cauſe or to explain.*

If this diſtinction then be properly regarded, it will evidently appear that a miraculous fact, contrary to the common courſe of Nature, *is very poſſible*, if directed by that Almighty hand which created all things, and gave them laws from which indeed they ſhould not deviate but at the will of their Divine Director.

And

And now, Mr. Hume, what becomes of your boaſted *Experience*, that infallible mirror? You ſee, Sir, it is faithleſs, and reflects a falſe and deceitful image.

MR. HUME.

I acknowledge your goodneſs, and the pains you have taken for my conviction: I have diligently attended to your arguments; I confeſs they carry with them the appearance of truth; but from a fortreſs that I have deemed impregnable, how can I endure to be driven? Suppoſe, however, that I ſhould allow the force of what you have urged, ſtill let me aſk, can any human teſtimony——

LORD HERBERT.

Hold, Sir: this is to wander from the point. The ſubject of debate was not whether any human teſtimony was ſufficient

cient to confirm the exiſtence of particular miracles, but the *poſſibility of any miracle at all.* You declare it to be utterly impoſſible that a miracle ſhould ever happen, and you ſupport your aſſertion by EXPERIENCE; I have ſhewn you that Experience, ſo far from ſupporting what you wiſh it to ſupport, throws the ſtrongeſt luſtre on that truth which you endeavour to envelope in obſcurity; and points out to the unprejudiced eye the indelible characters of that ſacred ſentence, *with God all things are poſſible* *.

MR. HUME.

Your errand is ſo *truly charitable*, and your condeſcending affability ſo great, that by them I am ſtrongly affected, though I cannot add that by your arguments I am convinced. I muſt ingenuouſly confeſs, that there is a ſomething within which

* Matthew, xix. 26.

whiſpers

whiſpers me that I am right, nor can I, for the life of me, think otherwiſe; I am not convinced, if overcome.

LORD HERBERT.

*Neither will they be convinced though one roſe from the dead**. Well, Sir, I will forbear you further; yet let me add, that in this very Eſſay of yours, wherein you put forth your whole ſtrength againſt Chriſtianity, there are many obſervations that are ill-grounded and erroneous. Indeed, as they are but branches from your grand argument of Experience, it would be uſeleſs labour to refute them, for as the root is ſtruck, they will naturally wither and die. But as you are now uſed to hear your infallibility called in queſtion, perhaps you will not be ſurpriſed if I deſire to engage you in a further converſation. If therefore, a month hence, at this hour, and in

* Luke xvi. 31.

this

this place, you have courage to meet, and patience to hear, I will again inform you of ſomething which I am convinced you do not expect to hear.

MR. HUME.

I hope I have given ſufficient proof that I have patience to hear my errors arraigned; and as to courage, your demeanour is ſuch, that in two minutes from your firſt appearance, I loſt all that natural apprehenſion which ariſes in the breaſt from ſo extraordinary a viſit.

LORD HERBERT.

You will meet me then?

MR. HUME.

I'll meet thee at Philippi.

this place, you have courage to meet, and patience to hear, I will again inform you of something which I am convinced you do not expect to hear.

MR. HUME.

I hope I have given sufficient proof that I have patience to hear my errors arraigned; and as to courage, your denunciation is such, that in two minutes from your first appearance, I lost all that natural apprehension which arises in the breast from the extraordinary in vitæ.

LORD HERBERT.

You will meet me then?

MR. HUME.

Where the Philistines

DIALOGUE II.

LORD HERBERT—MR. HUME.

MR. HUME.

THIS is the place, and it draws near the hour: my ſhadowy viſitor will, I doubt not, keep his appointment, and I am here ready to receive him, unapprehenſive, and without emotion. In this calm moment of reflection, then, let me conſider ---Is he right? What then am I? Surely in a dangerous error. But perhaps he is wrong---Well, and what do I gain? Certainly *nothing*; an uſeleſs and unprofitable victory! So then, if I am wrong, I loſe an invaluable ſtake; if right, I obtain---what?

a bubble! Why, this is desperate play; I begin to think it would be better to open my heart to conviction; at least, I am sure it would be wiser. But *go thy ways*, Reflection, *for the present*; *when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee*—— And here comes one, who, I apprehend, will find thee full employment.

LORD HERBERT.

I am pleased to find, Mr. Hume, that you are true to your appointment; you do not shun a friendly monitor; your readiness to converse with me speaks an ingenuous mind. Indeed, it is matter of astonishment and concern, that such fine talents as you are possessed of should yet be so miserably and fatally misemployed. It is a melancholy contemplation, and we view it with that sensation which a sweet * poet so beautifully describes:

* Young, in his Night Thoughts.

When

When I behold a genius, bright yet baſe,
Of towering talents, and terreſtrial aims,
Methinks I ſee, as thrown from her high ſphere,
The glorious fragments of a ſoul immortal
With rubbiſh mixt, and glittering in the duſt.

MR. HUME.

If the firſt part of your addreſs may be deemed flattery, the latter conveys a ſufficient antidote againſt any vanity that might ariſe in my breaſt on the occaſion.

LORD HERBERT.

It does—and I intended it ſhould: but I am no flatterer, Sir, and I believe you have received convincing proofs that I am not. An acknowledgment that you are maſter of eminent talents (which yet you have received from God*---*what haſt thou that*

* 1 Cor. iv. 7.

thou didſt not receive---and, conſequently, what room for vanity?) is no more than real juſtice. I and every good man upon earth have only to wiſh, that ſuch gifts had been exerted to nobler purpoſes. Enough, however, of this. You will not now, Sir, be ſurpriſed, if I tell you, that when you ſpeak of religion in general, your reaſoning is falſe, and your irony poor;—when you attack its miniſters, your language is coarſe, and your arguments fallacious;—that when you mention virtue, you ſeem not to know what virtue is;—and that—

MR. HUME.

Oh ſacred ſpirit! forbear, forbear the harſh detail; at leaſt, pour it not ſo profuſely upon me. If you will condeſcend to point out ſingly each defect, I will gladly hear you; will defend where I can, and fairly concede where I cannot.

LORD HERBERT.

You ſpeak, it muſt be confeſſed, with a becoming modeſty, as well as decent reſolution. But this, Sir, is an undertaking, which I ſhall not engage in at preſent: I know not whether time will *ever* be allowed me for it; *now* I am ſure it is not. At this viſit I wiſh to engage you on a ſubject of far leſs conſequence, indeed, than that of my laſt, and yet on a ſubject that may deſerve your attention.

MR. HUME.

I ſubmit to your pleaſure, and long to hear what ſubject you have pitched upon.

LORD HERBERT.

In your Eſſay on the Riſe of Arts and Sciences, you juſtly mark the *common licentiouſneſs and immodeſty* among the graveſt

Roman writers, and produce, as a contraſt to it, the purer and more decent manners of the authors of modern times. And this ſuperiority of refinement you attempt to account for——

MR. HUME.

Do I only *attempt* to account for it? It ſhould ſeem, then, that I have failed in the attempt.

LORD HERBERT.

Your account is laboured and ingenious, but it is far diſtant from the truth.

MR. HUME.

May I be informed, then, whence the modern ſuperiority ariſes?

LORD HERBERT.

From CHRISTIANITY. That ſurpriſe which your looks teſtify is not unexpected.

I was

I was ſure that this ſacred and real ſource of refinement never once entered your thoughts ---and therefore I was as ſure that it muſt ſurpriſe you.

MR. HUME.

Yes, indeed, it does ſurpriſe me. From Chriſtianity! The laſt thing I ſhould have thought of, I aſſure you.

LORD HERBERT.

And yet, if you wiſhed for the truth, it ought to have been the firſt thing you ſhould have thought of.

MR. HUME.

What! the Chriſtian religion inſpire politeneſs! The refined and poliſhed manners of a parſon are indeed remarkable, and his addreſs, both in geſture and ſpeech, highly delicate, truly!

Do but ſee how a parſon comes into a room!

LORD HERBERT.

Stop, Sir! nor ſhew yourſelf ſo true a diſciple of Shafteſbury, as to aim the feeble weapons of ridicule at the ſhield of truth. I deſcend not ſo low as to the ſupple delicacy of a faſhionable bow, nor to particular perſons among any order of Chriſtians, as examples of refinement; I ſpeak of the genius of the Chriſtian religion in general, which infuſes a ſpirit of purity and humble decency. This has produced that general refinement in writing and ſpeaking, which cannot but be ſeen and acknowledged: nay, you, Mr. Hume, yourſelf---

MR. HUME.

You will not, ſurely, produce me as an inſtance of the influence of Chriſtianity!

LORD HERBERT.

Why not you, Sir? You have *profeſſed* yourſelf its friend, you have called it

" *our*

"*our* moſt holy religion." Yes, Sir, on you has that moſt holy religion

"ſhed its ſelecteſt influence,"

ſo far as to refine your head and your hand ---Happy for you, if it had reached your heart! On you has the influence of this divine religion deſcended (ſilently, indeed, and unperceived, like the dew of heaven), and has purified your ideas, chaſtened your ſtyle, and given your juſtly admired Hiſtory that refinement of thought and decency of expreſſion, which cannot be drawn from the frivolous motives which you aſſign. I aſſure you, that if you had never heard of Chriſtianity, the *Hiſtory of England* would have been ſtained with as groſs expreſſions as that which you produce from the hiſtory of the Catilinarian war *.

* Hume's Eſſays, vol. i. p. 141.

MR. HUME.

All this may poſſibly be true; but you would not wiſh me to give my aſſent to it on your ſingle aſſertion. However great your authority may be, I cannot reſt ſatisfied in your account of the general influence of Chriſtianity on the language of hiſtory: but will you favour me with any particular proof, from the expreſs precepts of our religion, why immoral actions are not now painted in immoral terms, and why ſcenes of wickedneſs are at leaſt decently (if they are at all) related, and not ſet forth in the groſs language of Ovid, Salluſt, or Lucretius? For my part, I can gueſs at no proofs but ſuch as may be deduced from modern gallantry and honour.

LORD HERBERT.

Modern gallantry and honour, Sir! They are ſpecious maſks of vice, and productive

ductive of nothing but lewdneſs and murder. You, Mr. Hume, have pretty plainly hinted, that gallantry means adultery *; and well has modern honour been ſtyled "the ghoſt of a departed virtue." But I will give you the proof you deſire. Hear the expreſs words of an inſpired Apoſtle: FOR IT IS A SHAME EVEN TO SPEAK OF THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE DONE OF THEM IN SECRET †. Do theſe ſacred words need any comment? or will you now aſk for a particular reaſon "why im-"moral actions are not deſcribed in immo-"ral terms?"? I know you will not.—And now I have given you a proof of the refinement in *writing*, which Chriſtianity occaſioned, I will give you an inſtance of *politeneſs in ſpeaking*, ariſing from the ſame ſacred ſource, which the greateſt orators of Greece or Rome never equalled. When St.

? Vol. ii. p. 409. † Epheſ. v. 12.

Paul,

Paul, by his juſt as well as eloquent pleading before Agrippa, had drawn from the generous heathen that remarkable confeſſion, "Almoſt thou perſuadeſt me to be a "Chriſtian," mark with what ſweetneſs of expreſſion, with what genuine goodneſs of heart, and with what engaging politeneſs, the divine orator frames his reply: "I "would to God that not only thou, but "alſo all that hear me this day, were not "only *almoſt*, but *altogether*, ſuch as I am "---except theſe bonds!" It were an uſeleſs labour to point out to you, Mr. Hume, the politeneſs of the concluding exception in this elegant ſentence, any more than the ſacred warmth which dictated the introductory wiſh: only let me obſerve, that the divine charity and the amiable politeneſs of this inimitable anſwer were both the genuine and natural offspring of Chriſtianity.

And

And now, Sir, I believe you will allow, that the refinement in queſtion flows from the pure fountain which I have pointed out, rather than from the muddy pool whence you would have drawn it. I apprehend you will not "hew out broken ciſterns" rather than drink from the fountain of living waters.

MR. HUME.

I hear you with attention and pleaſure, and confeſs, that you have opened to me a ſource of politeneſs, of which I had not the moſt diſtant conception. Till now, I always deemed Chriſtianity a moroſe and unſocial, though an excellent and moral, rule of life.

LORD HERBERT.

Strange miſconception! and in you no otherwiſe to be accounted for, than that you read

read the Bible with a prejudice againſt it; and to the jaundiced eye every object appears diſcoloured. It is from this unhappy prejudice that you endeavoured to debaſe one of the brighteſt of the Chriſtian virtues, and to fully its pure luſtre by trampling it in the duſt.

MR. HUME.

What Chriſtian virtue?

LORD HERBERT.

Humility, Sir; on which, in various parts of your works, you made the ſevereſt attacks, ever labouring to render it mean and ſordid in the opinions of your readers.

MR. HUME.

I own that I always looked upon an humble diſpoſition of mind as deſpicable and

and degrading—as a ſuppoſed * and monkiſh † virtue—as ſcarce ever attainable ‡, if a man of ſpirit could deſcend ſo low as to attempt the acquiſition.

LORD HERBERT.

Yes, Sir; and this opinion of yours, which you have declared with ſo little reſerve, proves the juſtice of one of my aſſertions in what you called the *harſh* detail, at the beginning of this converſation; namely, "that when you treat of virtue, "you ſeem not to know what virtue is." But this only by the way. I ſhould not have now mentioned your contempt of this amiable virtue, had it not immediately related to our ſubject of refinement and politeneſs; for this very elegance, which we enquire after, flows immediately from Chriſtian humility.

* Vol. ii. p. 413. † Ibid. p. 343. ‡ Ibid. p. 413.

MR.

MR. HUME.

Indeed you amaze me. Politeneſs and humility! Elegance and meanneſs! Light and darkneſs! All equally congenial, in my opinion.

LORD HERBERT.

You have formed a curious group; and indeed you are aſtoniſhingly happy at ſuch mixtures, for the purpoſe of confounding truth with error, and making them appear as one; but I will diſſolve the unnatural union. In your opinion, light and darkneſs may be as congenial as politeneſs and humility; but truth determines otherwiſe. I will not waſte your time in laboured proofs: one ſhort Chriſtian precept ſhall, if you are not reſolved to ſhut your eyes againſt it, flaſh conviction upon you inſtantaneouſly and irreſiſtibly: IN HONOUR PRE-

PREFERRING ONE ANOTHER *. This, Sir, is the language of Chriſtianity; and need I aſk you, who ſo perfectly well know what politeneſs is, though ſo little whence it is derived, whether you do not ſee, in this ſhort ſentence, a beautiful mixture, a complete union of elegance and humility? You do, for you muſt, ſee it; "he that "runs may read."

MR. HUME.

You have withdrawn, I aſſure you, the veil of prejudice from my eyes, and I now ſee *the ſun of righteouſneſs* in its meridian ſplendor: but I cannot look at it; it is too bright. I ſhall for the future, however, walk in its light occaſionally. Without further metaphor, I ſhall read the ſacred writings with unprejudiced attention, and enjoy thoſe excellencies in them which you

* Romans, xii. 10.

have

have pointed out, and others which *now* I am ſure will frequently ariſe to me.

LORD HERBERT.

It is with pleaſure that I hear you expreſs yourſelf in this manner: your attention to the pure and divine volumes of your religion will be well rewarded, if the ſacred ſpirit of God aſſiſts your peruſal. May that ſacred ſpirit aſſiſt you, and "open "your eyes, that you may ſee the won-"drous things of his law."

I now take my leave of you, with at leaſt this ſatisfaction, that my viſits have not been totally in vain.

MR. HUME.

Indeed they have not: in your firſt viſit you confuted, but not convinced me; in this you have done both; and if I may hazard a conjecture on the ſucceſs of both, I would

would ſay, that in the firſt you engaged with the weapons of Reaſon alone, which I could in ſome ſort parry off; in this ſecond you called in Revelation to the aid of Reaſon—and this was a force that I could not withſtand. But you prepare to leave me: adieu then,

——heavenly gueſt!
Gentle to me, and affable, has been
Thy condeſcenſion, and ſhall be honour'd ever
With grateful memory. Thou to me
Be good and friendly ſtill!——

Would I could add,

——and oft return!

DIALOGUE III.

SHAKESPEARE—Mr. GARRICK.

MR. GARRICK,

ANGELS, and miniſters of grace, defend us!

SHAKESPEARE.

Your ſurpriſe is natural, and your expreſſion of it, in my own words, agreeable and pleaſing.

MR. GARRICK.

Your own words! It is, it muſt be Shakeſpeare—*the god of my idolatry!*

SHAKESPEARE.

Ah, Sir, forbear that language; I came

with deſign to applaud, chiefly to applaud; oblige me not at leaſt to begin our converſation in terms of diſapprobation. It will be more agreeable to me to inform you that I often ſee with pleaſure the emotions of a ſoul ſo like my own, which you exhibit in the characters which I have painted; I have painted them indeed, but you have given them life.

MR. GARRICK.

Oh how flattering to my heart is this applauſe from you!

SHAKESPEARE.

Juſtice is not flattery: nor ſhould I deſcend to give applauſe which was not due; nor even this, but for the ſake of that virtue which you have encouraged by ſo forcibly animating my characters. Often have I looked down upon you with delight, and ſeen poor old Lear (for you were the

man himſelf) ſtruggling under the burden of affliction with ſuch pathetic exertions as have melted the marble heart of filial ingratitude, and the till then *thankleſs child* has left the ſcene with a ſoul effectually reformed and affectionately dutiful. This I know to have been the happy effect of your animated repreſentations; this is indeed the grand uſe of ſuch ſcenes, which receive an irreſiſtible force when you realize them; and the loſs of which neceſſary aid I cannot but lament in the proſpect of your retiring from the ſtage.

MR. GARRICK.

Thus encouraged and thus applauded, how ſhall I expreſs the ſatisfaction that I feel? It *beggars all deſcription:* but it were meanneſs in me to drink only the delicious draughts of approbation: I wiſh for improvement; I wiſh to hear in what

I am reprehenſible; from *you*, ſuch information would come with real weight.

SHAKESPEARE.

Amidſt innumerable excellencies there are a few faults. You ſometimes "over-"ſtep the modeſty of nature."

MR. GARRICK.

Favour me with an inſtance.

SHAKESPEARE.

In Richard the Third; whoſe wild ambition I expoſed in the ſtrongeſt colours, yet not beyond nature; but when you aſſumed the character, exquiſitely and juſtly as you repreſented ſome parts of it, others you overacted; your violent exertion of voice, and earneſt action, both exceeded thoſe bounds which juſt nature has fixed to propriety. But I will do myſelf and you the juſtice to obſerve, that thoſe paſſages in which

which you thus offended were the alterations of Cibber *, who ſtudied more the ſtage trick

* Particularly in the concluſion of Richard's ſoliloquy on conſcience.

Great men chuſe greater ſins—ambition 's mine.

In the pronouncing which laſt words, all the actors I ever ſaw (Mr. Garrick not excepted) raiſed both hands erect above the head, in the ridiculous attitude of a perſon endeavouring to get rid of an hiccough, or in act to leap.

Now I am upon the ſubject of alteration, I cannot but obſerve, that many of Shakeſpeare's plays are altered for the worſe, and many fine paſſages entirely omitted. Two of which I ſhall take notice of. One is in Macbeth, when an account of the murder of his family is brought to Macduff, he cries out,

My children too!—

And then, after a pathetic pauſe, goes on,

Did you ſay, all?—What! all?

The other omiſſion is in Lear; who, when he is driven to the extremity of diſtreſs in the laſt act, is no longer able to ſupport the weight of affliction, but, burſting as it were with anguiſh, he cries,

Pray you—undo this button;

and inſtantly expires. This beautiful ſtroke of nature is, and muſt be neceſſarily, loſt by the preſent alteration. It was too fine a thought however to eſcape the notice of the ingenious author of Sidney Bidulph: when one of her capital perſons (Mr. Warner) is ſuddenly affected with an unexpected ſtroke of generoſity, he ſays nothing but "Good God!

trick of rant and noiſe, than the genuine emotions of ambition or deſpair.

MR. GARRICK.

I will no otherwiſe attempt to juſtify theſe offences againſt nature than merely by obſerving, that I committed them in compliance with the taſte of the audience, even againſt my own judgment.

SHAKESPEARE.

Say "your own *better* judgment;" but ſtill it was a vicious compliance, like that which induced me to pun and quibble.

MR. GARRICK.

I erred however with your authority on my ſide.

"Good God! and, *undoing two or three buttons at his* "*breaſt*, ſobbed as if his boſom was burſting." A paſſage which I could never read without melting into tears.

SHAKE-

SHAKESPEARE.

True: but ſound judgment muſt condemn both. Yet though I ſtooped to ſuch mean compliances, I would wiſh you to avoid them; I would have your ſun without ſpots. But there is a larger ſpot which in a high degree obſcures its luſtre.

MR. GARRICK.

You alarm me!

SHAKESPEARE.

Your celebrated Jubilee—which you affectionately deſigned as an honourable memorial of gratitude and applauſe, approached ſo near to ſuperſtition and blaſphemy, as to become highly diſagreeable to me.

MR. GARRICK.

My intention was widely different:

SHAKE-

SHAKESPEARE.

It might be; and it was, no doubt; but you unfortunately contrived to render the incenſe you offered, doubly diſguſtful; you painfully reminded me of my own error, by adopting it yourſelf.

MR. GARRICK.

I beg you would explain yourſelf, by pointing out the culpable inſtance.

SHAKESPEARE.

You made uſe of my own expreſſion—the very expreſſion with which you juſt now ſaluted me, and which I "intreated "you to forbear." *The God of our idolatry!* What words are theſe to be ſpoken of mortal man? I indeed uſed them very improperly *, but your repetition of them in ſo ſolemn a manner in the Jubilee Ode,

* In Romeo and Juliet, where, in the garden-ſcene, ſhe deſires him to ſwear by himſelf—*the God of her idolatry!*

and

and application of them to me, was utterly inexcuſable.

MR. GARRICK.

I own, that now you point them out, there ſeems an impropriety, but I could not think them improper in the application then, and even yet would flatter myſelf that they are not in a high degree blameable.

SHAKESPEARE.

Oh, Sir, the ſacred name of God is not to be trifled with; your own good ſenſe, thus awakened, whiſpers you it is not—I *know* it is not. The phraſe, therefore, both as I uſed it, and as you applied it, was indeed blameable in a high degree. Many a poet has leſſened his glories in the regions of immortality by ſuffering his imagination to ſoar, unreſtrained by judgment, too near to inacceſſible light; theſe

unwar-

unwarrantable ſallies have occaſioned the angel, whoſe buſineſs it is to prepare the amaranthine crowns, to pluck a ſtar from the radiant circle, and a falling tear *(tears ſuch as angels weep)*, while it witneſſed the pain of the employment, has ſullied the glories of the reſt. Thomſon enjoys now a rank in glory much ſuperior to many bards whom, in point of genius, he was greatly beneath when on earth; and juſtly, for the reaſons given, no leſs poetically than truly, by his noble panegyriſt:

His chaſte Muſe employ'd her heaven-taught lyre,
None but the nobleſt paſſions to inſpire,
Not one immoral, one corrupted thought,
One line which, dying, he might wiſh to blot.

But I dwell no longer on the ſubject; I ſee conviction and concern in your countenance: let me return to the firſt part of our converſation, and to the apprehenſions

I have

I have expreſſed on the proſpect of your leaving the ſtage; let me add my diſſuaſive voice, and ſtill urge your continuance to promote the cauſe of virtue by your animated action.

MR. GARRICK.

Oh, ſweeteſt Shakeſpeare! Fancy's child!

Your voice, whether approving or reproving, has irreſiſtible charms; but I cannot comply with your requeſt, nor can I be ſo vain as to think that none will be found to ſupply my place when I retire.

SHAKESPEARE.

Enow will be found to ſupply it; but how ſupply it? At preſent I ſee no hopes of any one performer that may be in any degree equal; had Powell indeed lived, your loſs might have been more readily ſubmitted to: he was truly a child of Nature, and it is but juſtice due to his memory to record

record him as ſuch. His ſenſibility of heart gave him not the trouble to put on the actor, for it made him at once become the man; it ſupplied the ready tear, the expreſſive change of countenance, the fluſh of glowing pleaſure, or the pale languor of diſtreſs; theſe nothing can produce upon the cheek but a feeling heart, the gift of Nature—theſe mimic Art in vain attempts to imitate, and theſe Powell poſſeſſed in the fulleſt manner; but this favourite of mine and yours is gone *; where

* The following epitaph on Mr. Powell appeared in the public papers ſoon after his death:

EPITAPH, imitated from Martial.

Quiſquis Flaminium teris viator
Noli nobile præterire Marmor, &c.

Whoe'er thou art that tread'ſt this awful dome,
Oh, paſs not heedleſs by this ſacred tomb;
Wit, art, and grace, the pleaſure of the age,
The pride and ſorrow of the Britiſh ſtage:
(Read this—and reading drop the tender tear)
All lie interr'd with gentle POWELL here.

then

then ſhall the ſtage find another like him and you?

MR. GARRICK.

I moſt readily join in your juſt applauſe of Powell, as well as in your concern for his death; but you forget my pupil, Holland.

SHAKESPEARE.

I do not: but I have no inclination to remember him: he was the pupil of Art, as Powell was of Nature; how have I ſhrunk to ſee him in Macbeth ſtep your very ſtep, move your motions, and as far as diligent imitation would permit, copy your very looks; but ſenſibility of heart, the eſſential foundation of every excellence upon the ſtage, Holland never had. No, my favourite ſon, as they, who might have ſucceeded you with ſomething of merit like

your

your own, are no more, and as now none ſuch appears, be prevailed upon not yet to quit that ſtage which you tread with ſo much credit to yourſelf, and ſo much profit as well as pleaſure to the public. In the mean time ſome one may ariſe——

MR. GARRICK.

I will not, indeed I cannot, reſiſt your forcible perſuaſion: you have a right to command, and I to obey: a year or two longer I will continue my employment, and happy ſhall I be if virtue be encouraged by any animation which I can give to thoſe images formed by your maſterly hand. But after a little longer employment of this kind, I muſt adopt the ſentiment of Horace* and retire in time. In

* Et mihi prægatam crebro qui perſonat aurem,
Solvè ſenescentem mature ſanus equum, ne
Peccet ad extremum. HOR. EP.

the

the mean while be aſſured, paternal ſhade, that I will make good uſe of the hints you have given me.

SHAKESPEARE.

Farewel!—remember me.

DIALOGUE IV.

FIELDING*—COURTNEY MELMOTH.

FIELDING.

STOP, dear Melmoth, ſtop that rapid pen.

MR. MELMOTH.

What! what emotions are theſe! Surely ſomething extraordinary—

A voice there ſeem'd, which whiſper'd in my ear—

* Since the writing of this Dialogue, Mr. Melmoth has thought proper to appear in ſuch a variety of characters (particularly as *Apologiſt for the Life and Writings of David Hume, Eſquire*), as may give us ſome grounds to call in queſtion the prophetic ſpirit of Fielding.

FIELDING.

'Twas Reaſon's voice, which ſometimes one may hear.

Yes, dear lively youth, it was the voice of Reaſon ſpeaking to you by the ſpirit of Fielding.

MR. MELMOTH.

Of Fielding! Oh father of humour, would but a portion of thy ſpirit, like the mantle———

FIELDING.

I muſt interrupt you, and in the courſe of our converſation will give a reaſon for my interruption. You poſſeſs ſuch an ever-flowing vivacity, ſuch a fund of genuine wit, that your labours (if labours they may be called, which ſeem formed without trouble) are highly entertaining.

MR.

MR. MELMOTH.

Your applauſe is inexpreſſibly grateful.

FIELDING.

It would be more juſtly ſo, could it be extended to excellencies more valuable; could I ſay, that Religion chaſtened your humour, and Judgment held the reins to curb your wit—then, my valuable young friend, my commendation would be pleaſurable indeed, becauſe founded on a ſolid baſis. But in a writer, where a deep ſenſe of Religion ſways not his heart, and ſober Judgment guides not his head, believe me, his

Wit dies a jeſt, and Humour but a ſound.

MR. MELMOTH.

Am I then accuſed of wanting both theſe requiſites?

FIELDING.

No; of wanting neither, but neglecting both. Your elegant pen, in the exuberance and livelineſs of your thoughts, overlooks them: could you be perſuaded to pay a ſtrict attention to theſe eſſentials, your works would become truly valuable. To convince you of your error, and to prove the reality of it by pointing out exceptionable inſtances, is the chief purpoſe of my preſent viſit:—but not the only purpoſe;—applauſe, ſincere and warm and juſt applauſe ſhall have its ſhare. Nor do I deſpair, by a proper mixture of commendation and reproof, to render you an object completely, as you are now highly, worthy of my attention; for, as your guardian ſpirit, I inform you, that I watch your pen; and, capable as it is of producing much public good or miſchief, it ſhall be my province

province to prevent the latter, and promote the former.

MR. MELMOTH.

An information like this awakens my moſt earneſt attention, engages my warmeſt gratitude, and fills my heart with the trueſt pleaſure. Improvement is my moſt ardent wiſh, and public good the idol of my heart. Oh, great maſter of the human heart! I profeſs myſelf the warm, the paſſionate admirer of the charms of Virtue; I wiſh to promote her ſacred cauſe. With your aſſiſtance, what may I not hope for? Proceed then, I beſeech you, and the moſt wrapt attention ſhall engage me.

FIELDING.

I truſt your warm profeſſions: like your own hero BENIGNUS, your heart is open, generous, full of ſenſibility; and though

you are ſeemingly well verſed in the ways of this great town, I know you are not ſo far *hackneyed in them* as to be hardened by them.—And now where ſhall I begin? So wide a field lies before me——

MR. MELMOTH.

If my wiſhes might direct you, let cenſure firſt take place: applauſe, if you have applauſe to give, will more gratefully cloſe your friendly viſit.

FIELDING.

A want of method, then, in your *Liberal Opinions* renders them leſs agreeable. Sterne, fantaſtic, giddy, and ſenſible—Sterne delighted in that wild wood-note ſtrain of digreſſive and irregular writing, which has captivated numberleſs copyiſts, and ſpoiled them all: you, among the reſt, have been drawn too far into the vortex of his giddineſs,

neſs, and whirled about with a whimſical, and not unfrequently a diſagreeable, irregularity. I make no doubt but you have your reaſons to urge for this deſultory manner of writing; what will you plead in its defence?

MR. MELMOTH.

Variety, the ſoul of writing. I judged that it relieved the mind from a continued attention, by its pleaſing digreſſions and excurſive flights.

FIELDING.

Variety is, as you obſerve, the ſoul of writing; but repeated digreſſions, and flights under no reſtraint of method, perplex the mind, and by engaging it too deeply in purſuit of the almoſt inviſible chain, deſtroy their own end, and weaken attention into wearineſs and diſguſt. Indeed, my young friend, method is eſſential

to

to good writing; and I *now* may, without the imputation of vanity, recommend the method which I uſed myſelf. There cannot be a better; and what I humorouſly delivered as an authoritative mandate, under the aſſumed title of King of the Realms of Hiſtory-writing *, I now ſeriouſly urge as the only true and juſt method † of compoſing a *moral Tale*, which may be at once

* Hiſtory of a Foundling, book ii. chap. 1. ad fin.

† This our Author mentions in the ſame Hiſtory, book ix. chap. 1. And his words are remarkable, when he ſays, "a "ſwarm of fooliſh Novels and monſtrous Romances will be "produced, either to the great impoveriſhment of Bookſel-"lers, or to the great loſs of time and depravation of morals "in the Reader." One would almoſt fancy he foreſaw that inundation of trash which has poured in upon us from the neglect of his rules. The Author of *Pompey the Little*

Oſtendunt terris hunc tantum fata, nec ultra
Eſſe ſinunt——

is the only one I know who has followed this method of Fielding's, which he has particularly mentioned in his introductory Chapter to the Second Book, entitled, *Of Nothing*—a chapter, by the way, only to be found in the firſt edition of this ſenſible and entertaining little work.

inſtruc-

inſtructive and entertaining. I appeal, in what I am going to ſay, to your own heart.—Though Sterne touches you frequently with beautiful ſtrokes of wit and tenderneſs, yet does Uncle Toby (amiable as he is) pleaſe you like Allworthy, or Adams, or Dr. Harriſon?

MR. MELMOTH.

He does not. The vivid lightning at a diſtance flaſhes ſurpriſe and pleaſure upon the eye; but the animating light of the ſun fills it with a very different ſenſation.

FIELDING.

Your lively ſimilitude ſhews no leſs the quickneſs, than the juſtice of your apprehenſion. But let me aſk you one queſtion more, and we will then diſmiſs the ſubject of Method. Do you not find more reluctance to lay down the book, when engaged

in the Hiſtory of a Foundling, than in the Life and Opinions of Triſtram Shandy?

MR. MELMOTH.

I do.

FIELDING.

Yes; and the charm which detains you in the one is Method—and it is Irregularity which ſets you free in the other. In the one you are led on by an agreeable connection, which, though pleaſingly varied, you keep conſtantly in view; in the other, you are drawn a thouſand different ways, to the frequent loſs of that neceſſary chain, which you as frequently purſue: but, alas! it is often imperceptible—and when perceived, the diſcovery of it does not (indeed no diſcovery can) compenſate for the perplexity and trouble of the purſuit.

MR.

MR. MELMOTH.

I argue not in defence of the Irregular in writing; indeed, it were to no purpoſe to attempt it—for what you have urged is too juſt and true to be contradicted; and though I have given into this deſultory manner, yet I ſee the impropriety of it, and readily ſubſcribe to the ſuperiority of a chaſter and more correct Method. Indeed I flatter myſelf, that I have given proof, that I do not always give the reins to a wild imagination;—my *Pupil of Pleaſure* moves in his career with the moſt dramatic regularity.

FIELDING.

And therefore his hiſtory affords more pleaſure than any thing you ever wrote.—This point thus ſettled, then, we will proceed to your delineation of Characters.—Here you have ſucceeded beyond any writer

of

of your time, and marked the vaſt variety with the hand of a maſter: but you have erred in two capital points; one, in painting monſters of vice frequently in too pleaſing, as well as always in too ſtrong colours; and the other, in not ſufficiently guarding your reader againſt infection from ſuch deteſtable company.

MR. MELMOTH.

This is a charge which, I confeſs, I did not expect.

FIELDING.

Not, perhaps, from me—but from the *folks of this world* you certainly did expect it; for you have endeavoured to obviate the reflections which you ſuppoſed might be made upon this head.

MR.

MR. MEL·MOTH.

Indeed, I think that no one ever "blamed "Richardſon for his Lovelace, or, to come "nearer home, Fielding for his Blifil *."

FIELDING.

There was no room for cenſure. Blifil was deteſtable, and he was painted deteſtable; the gauze of hypocriſy which was thrown over him ſufficiently diſcovered the monſter underneath: but had I drawn him in a dreſs that might have rendered him pleaſing, and in a great meaſure caſt his deformity into a ſhade, my end in exhibiting his character had been defeated. But you have drawn a character, which, though it is infamouſly bad, you have yet embelliſhed with ſo many pleaſing traits, and caſt ſuch a luſtre round it by the brightneſs and vi-

* Preface to Liberal Opinions, vol. v.

vacity

vacity of your colouring, that the incautious reader is apt too much to admire what he ought to deteſt. Indeed, this charge lies almoſt equally ſtrong againſt the animated Lovelace of Richardſon.

MR. MELMOTH.

Which of my Characters is thus dangerous?

FIELDING.

Draper—a young gentleman whom you have repreſented as eaſy, affable, ſenſible, polite, witty, and compaſſionate; and yet this man, thus entertaining and thus captivating, initiates a young friend in ſcenes of debauchery, and then laughs at his remorſe—makes a macaroni debauchee his pimp—does a generous action, from no higher motive than that which induces him to eat or drink—declares he would not

ſcruple,

ſcruple, *let the conſequence be what it might* *, to commit adultery—and to complete the part of this Character, whom you deſcribe as "always ready for the vice or "the virtue of the moment †," he dies in a duel, the victim of falſe honour.——This, my young and ingenious friend, is a dangerous picture, ſet off by your agreeable pen in colours much too pleaſing. Are you not ſenſible of this? Yes, I ſee you are; I perceive that your heart at this moment tells you, that too much laboured elegance beſtowed upon a vicious character, is only gilding a poiſon, in order to render it at once palatable and fatal.

MR. MELMOTH.

I bluſh at the recollection, and am convinced. But you charged me with "not "ſufficiently guarding my reader againſt

* Liberal Opinions, vol. v. p. 22. † Ibid. p. 48.

" the infection of ill Characters." Here I apprehend I have been particularly, I ſhould hope effectually, cautious. " It " has been the conſtant care of my Hiſtory " to make every contraſt conſpicuous. " Thoſe writers who employ themſelves in " drawing pictures of Virtue, do her but " *half* juſtice: the real gem is ſet off by " the foil; the charms of Beauty are " heightened by Deformity: in like man- " ner, the luſtre of Virtue derives greater " brilliancy from being oppoſed to the " ſquallid appearance of Vice *." Every vicious character has its oppoſite in the courſe of the ſtory, and the one may ſerve as an antidote to the poiſon of the other.

FIELDING.

Not to mention that there is no contraſt to the capital character of Draper, and

* Preface, p. 10.

there-

therefore the poiſon of ſo dangerous an example is left to work in its full force—yet though contraſts to other vicious characters may be, as you ſay they are, conſpicuous, ſtill they want ſtrength; and I am ſorry to obſerve, that the force of your painting, the warmth and glow of your imagination, lie on the ſide of Vice. This might be inſtanced in many of the oppoſites which you have yourſelf pointed out; —ſuffice it to obſerve, that the *Fragment of the Lady* is not ſufficiently ſtrong to eraſe the ill impreſſions formed by the ſyſtem of the Freethinker. But why was this vile ſyſtem introduced at all?—What *good* end could it anſwer?—This is undoubtedly among the paſſages which, as you obſerve, "certain Editors would have ſuppreſſed."—It had been better if you had done ſo.

MR. MELMOTH.

Surely, my revered monitor, if the maxim of the poet be true—

Vice is a monſter of that frightful mien,
As to be hated, needs but to be ſeen;

it follows——

FIELDING.

Dear youth, nothing can follow but falſehood from a falſe propoſition——If the maxim be true!——The maxim is utterly falſe. To pure unembodied ſpirits, indeed, the hatefulneſs of Vice may appear upon the view; but while the ſoul is clothed in fleſh and blood, the ſight of Vice does not always inſpire averſion; nay, too often it is the object of love. Aſk the voluptuary of any kind, aſk the covetous and the proud, what conſequence follows from the daily *ſight* of their vices—will they tell you, hatred?

hatred? Alas! I fear not: they will rather own an increaſe of their paſſion for them, which they will indulge, with your Draper, "let the conſequence be what it might." If, then, the tinſel of the lines you have quoted had been ſterling gold, your exhibition of the portraits of Vice had been ſerviceable to the cauſe of Virtue; but the ſhining metal proves no better than *flimſy French wire*, and leaves my aſſertion in full force, that ſuch deteſtable characters had better never be ſhewn to the Public.—And there is yet a miſchief in them, of which I am ſure you are not aware: by publiſhing vicious actions or vicious opinions, you ſpread them wherever your book is diſperſed, through a thouſand channels, to hearts where, *but for you*, they had never found admiſſion. In this caſe, ignorance is innocence, as it is moſt likely that knowledge is corruption. The Freethinker's

effuſions, for inſtance, in the Roundhouſe and in the Robin-Hood, vile as they are, *but for you*, had remained in the dirty ſocieties where they were delivered, and not have been diffuſed far and wide. You ſeem ſurpriſed; what would you obſerve? Speak freely.

MR. MELMOTH.

You charge me ſeverely—I fear truly; but will not the charge return upon yourſelf? Are not ſome of your Characters of this ſhocking caſt?

FIELDING.

They are: full well do I know they are—and full ſincerely do I wiſh they had never been written: yet let me obſerve, that they are but few; and of them, even the very worſt are infinitely leſs ſhocking to decency and religion, than thoſe which I

have

have inſtanced from your *liberal* pen. But be they what they may, I *know* they are wrong; I am therefore better qualified to warn you againſt them; and led by the tender watchfulneſs of my guardian care, as well as ſwayed by the juſteſt reaſon, I here caution you to forbear, for the future, exerciſing your ready and voluble pen on ſubjects big with ſuch complicated miſchief.

MR. MELMOTH.

I gratefully acknowledge your care, and reſpectfully regard your caution. But you will not leave me, without performing the promiſe you made at the beginning of our converſation. You ſaid, you "would give "me a reaſon for your interrupting me," when I wiſhed for a portion of your ſpirit to deſcend upon me, like the mantle of Elijah: methought there ſeemed more in your interruption than I could comprehend.

I was awed by a ſeverity in your countenance, which yet ſeemed tempered by a pleaſing benignity. If I erred in any thing, Oh gentle ſpirit, ſet me right.

FIELDING.

Father of men and angels! thou wilt not ſuffer this amiable, this well-diſpoſed mind to ſtray from thee!—Wonder not, dear object of my care, at the warmth of my apoſtrophe:—I love your honeſt heart, and enjoy the ſweet concern of my office. You wiſh to know why I interrupted you: I will tell you; and the explanation will lead me into a detail, which muſt contain ſome harſh and ſevere truths: but will you profit by them? I know you will profit by them.

MR. MELMOTH.

Detain me not in painful expectation, I beg.

FIELD-

FIELDING.

Your alluſion to the mantle of Elijah was the impropriety I wiſhed to check:—this, though modeſt when compared with the bold uſe you have made of the language of Revelation, was not to be paſſed over unobſerved; therefore I interrupted you: the ſacred ſtory ought not to be treated with familiar freedom *. When we walk in the regions of Revelation, every ſpot whereon we tread *is holy ground* —it behoves us, therefore, to be cautious of

* "I do not like this interweaving ſcripture phraſes: it is to "expoſe thoſe venerable books too much to the hazard of "ridicule; it is, perhaps, ſomething like diveſting the ma-"giſtrate of his robes of honour, and turning him to a mad "and prejudiced populace in the nakedneſs of a common "man. The books of ſcripture are no doubt moſt excellent "in themſelves; but their veneration, as the world is, muſt, "like magiſtracy, be in ſome meaſure ſupported by outward "circumſtance and ceremony. Truth is very amiable naked "—but ſubjected the more to be injured by thoſe who have "no taſte of her beauty."

Archbiſhop Herring to Mr. Duncombe, Letter v. p. 12.

our

our ſteps. If, then, this tranſient alluſion be not excuſeable, what ſhall be ſaid for thoſe daring, thoſe gigantic inſults againſt Heaven, which you (ſurely without thought or deſign) have too liberally thrown out in numberleſs paſſages of your *Liberal Opinions?* When I conſider them, I almoſt tremble for my ward. Dear Melmoth, how could you (whom I know to have the cauſe of Virtue at your heart—and Virtue falls to nothing unſupported by Revelation) throw ſuch ſhocking inſults on the ſacred word, as muſt, if of force, weaken its influence, and by conſequence wound that Virtue which you wiſh to encourage? I will not produce many inſtances: too many might be produced: but how could you put mean alluſions to ſcripture into the mouth of Abrahams—or make the infamous gallant of the more infamous Lucy, in his accurſed

accurſed letter to her *, ſay of Benignus, "*Aſk, and he gives*—*knock* at his purſe, "though ever ſo gently, and *he opens it* "*unto thee?*"—Though theſe two inſtances might be ſufficient, yet one more I will give, ſo capitally groſs as muſt ſhock your ſerious reflection:—In the church-yard ſcene between *Earthworm* and *Nahfleſh*, Religion turns pale, and ſtarts at their repeated impieties. Ludicrous reflections upon the moſt awful ſcene of Reſurrection (I will not quote, and I *ſee* you recollect them) flaſh upon us every moment, and form a moſt horrid glare of infernal wit:—and all this from you!—from you, who once had thoughts of entering holy orders!—from you——But I urge too much: you ſeem affected.

* Vol. vi. p. 102.

MR.

MR. MELMOTH.

Oh, rightly judged: my countenance belies my heart, if it does not beſpeak a deep and unaffected ſenſe of every word you utter. I ſee, I feel the force of truth: "How could I," you ſay—Yes, how indeed could I ſuffer the reins to lie looſe upon the neck of a luxuriant imagination, and permit it, in all the wild wantonneſs of an effervescent and unreſtrained ſpirit, to range over ſacred ground, and trample down its divine produce? Gracious God! I am aſtoniſhed at myſelf—But hence, ye wild, ye wantonly-profane ideas, I give ye to the winds: may ye be ſcattered and loſt, the ſport of warring elements; never, never from henceforth to enter and corrupt the yet-untainted heart of bluſhing innocence, or to add fuel to that fire, which already blazes with horrid violence in the

breaſt of the bold and obdurate Free-thinker!

FIELDING.

I would not interrupt your warm and heart-felt effuſion: it proves that I have not addreſſed you in vain. Continue in this mind, and the end of my monition is anſwered. And now, let me aſk, does not this ſhew the juſtice of what I at firſt obſerved to you, that a deep ſenſe of religion and due judgment were eſſentials in a writer, who would wiſh to ſerve the cauſe of Virtue?

Mr. MELMOTH.

It does: the light of truth beams upon me with irreſiſtible force.

FIELDING.

Write always under this conviction, and you will attain that ſummit of excellence which

which you aim at. You will effectually promote the intereſt of Virtue by exhibiting that luxuriance of fancy, that fertility of invention, that elegance of expreſſion, which you ſo happily poſſeſs, corrected by the hands of Religion and Judgment.

MR. MELMOTH.

If I purſue this track thus marked and circumſcribed, what becomes of *natural* characters? Are there not many which will overleap theſe bounds, and yet ſuch as may be frequently met with in real life?

FIELDING.

There are:—but who would chuſe to paint Nature in its extreme deformity? Diſguſtful, infectious, and diſagreeable; ſuch portraits are the children only of a depraved heart, which delights to dwell upon the vileſt objects: your heart, my young friend, is not of this nature.

MR.

MR. MELMOTH.

If I know my own heart, it is not. But will you favour me with a brief recapitulation of your inſtructions? Oblige me, by collecting their ſcattered rays to a point; they will thus ſtrike with greater power, and make the deeper impreſſion.

FIELDING.

Moſt willingly. Ever let Religion and Judgment influence your pen, and be careful not to permit a luxuriant imagination to hurry you beyond their bounds. Avoiding the Shandean, deſultory way of writing, adopt a method, and let that method be *mine**. As there never was, nor ever will be, a perfect Epic Poem, but ſuch as is formed upon the model of Homer and Virgil, ſo there can never be a

* I apprehend that thoſe parts of the Hiſtory of Benignus, which are moſt like Fielding in the diviſion and titles of the chapters, are by far the beſt and moſt agreeable.

perfect *Moral History* (the word *Novel* is ſunk juſtly into diſgrace), which is not formed upon the plan of Fielding. Fear not by this reſtraint that fancy, and wit, and humour, will want room to exert and exerciſe their pleaſing powers—they will have full ſufficient, and will attain that agreeable poliſh, and juſt ſuperiority over rambling luxuriance, which ſociety civilized by laws exhibits, and which cannot be met with in the wild range of unreſtrained barbarity. Forbear to put forth a vicious character in pleaſing and captivating colours: characters indeed ought to be mixed (otherwiſe they are unnatural); yet, to render them uſeful, their virtues ſhould be ſet in the faireſt point of view, and their vices only ſufficiently ſeen to ſhew that they are odious, and always branded as ſuch. A totally vicious character ſhould never be *drawn at all*; for no contraſt can ever be

ſufficient

ſufficient to eraſe the ill impreſſions which that fixes; and even ſuppoſe it were ſufficient, the healing of the wound will leave a ſcar, and deform the faireſt mind: not unfrequently, however, the contraſt is hurried over as dull, or perhaps not read at all, while the poiſon of the vicious character is left to work in its full force. One thing I purpoſely paſſed over, in order to give you an example: you are apt to paint ſcenes of wantonneſs with a voluptuous warmth; they ought to be treated, as I treat them now—haſtily hinted at, but not deſcribed—they are dangerous corruptors of the human heart. Sacred writ ſhould ever be deemed ſacred, and by no means lightly introduced into your writings; the leaſt error of this kind is a degree of profanation, and ſuch as your guardian ſpirit warmly cautions you to avoid.

MR. MELMOTH.

It is not in words to expreſs my gratitude; expreſſion fails——

FIELDING.

Now let me cloſe my viſit with that applauſe you juſtly merit. Your heart I know is good, and you are a maſter of the paſſions: your wit is flowing, your language is elegantly expreſſive; your hand in drawing characters is the hand of a maſter, and you unfold the mazes of the human heart with uncommon readineſs. When you exert your power in the pathetic, you make every fibre of the finer affections vibrate, and melt the reader, who has but a ſpark of ſenſibility, into tears. You vary your characters with a happy facility, and give them every mark of originality. Your deſign in your *Pupil of Pleaſure* is great and good: never was

there a happier thought, than thus to perſonify Lord Cheſterfield's maxims, and by a natural train of events demonſtrate their pernicious, their fatal tendency. Virtue looks with a grateful ſmile upon your attempt, and all the friends of virtue owe and give you their warmeſt thanks: in a word, this work is, as indeed all your other are, excellent; and if your future writings be influenced by the inſtructions I have given you, they will be amiable patterns of life, will ſerve the cauſe of Virtue moſt effectually, and render you (what I think I foreſee you will be) one of the firſt writers of the age.

Farewel, then:—my bleſſings on thee!
And theſe few precepts in thy memory
See thou character.

DIALOGUE V.

BISHOP SHERLOCK—SOAME JENYNS, ESQ.

MR. JENYNS.

WHAT mean theſe lines of Milton, which I find now the third time laid upon my table! What can they allude to? and who placed them there?

SHERLOCK.

I placed them there.

MR. JENYNS.

You!—What may this mean?—I am as little apt to be ſurpriſed, or ſubject to emo-

tion, as any man, but ſurely this is extraordinary: would I could be favoured with a ſight of him who thus unuſually addreſſes me!

SHERLOCK.

Now know me, then, for Sherlock.

MR. JENYNS.

I know thee well:—well do I remember the venerable mien of the ableſt advocate for Chriſtianity whom theſe later ages have produced. But, oh friendly ſhade (for ſure the end of your viſit is friendly), why did you place theſe lines ſo particularly before me? and to what do they allude?

SHERLOCK.

Read them once more, and ſee if you cannot find an application.

MR.

MR. JENYNS.

Neither man nor angel can diſcern
Hypocriſy: the only evil that walks
Inviſible—except to God alone,

What of theſe?

SHERLOCK.

Nay, if your own heart does not make the application, I moſt certainly ſhall not.

MR. JENYNS.

Am I then guilty of hypocriſy?

SHERLOCK.

Far be it from me to ſay that: I told you that I ſhould not make the application:—indeed I cannot.

Neither man nor ſpirit can diſcern—

But does or does not your own heart accuſe you of inſincerity in your work upon *the Internal Evidences of the Chriſtian Religion?*

MR. JENYNS.

It does not: I wrote, as I profeſs to have written *, from a conviction of the divine original of this religion.

SHERLOCK.

I muſt believe you: but as this is the caſe, I purpoſe to ſhew you, that you have not treated Chriſtianity as if you wiſhed to ſerve its cauſe; that you have argued weakly; which, if not deſigned, is not to be accounted for in a writer of your acknowledged judgment and good ſenſe; that you have uſed many expreſſions carrying with them an air of ridicule, which, if ſerious, are on ſuch a ſubject unaccountable; that you have furniſhed Deiſts and Freethinkers with unanſwered arguments againſt the cauſe of religion; a conduct which can ſcarcely be deduced from the

* Page penult.

friendſhip you profeſs to it; and that you have enforced your arguments, and drawn up your concluſion, with ſuch liſtleſſneſs, and in ſuch a ſtyle of rock-water, as if you did not wiſh to have them believed.

MR. JENYNS.

You preſs me cloſely, I confeſs; I am not, however, conſcious of the juſtice of your obſervations; if I am favoured with them more fully, they will more probably have their due effect.

SHERLOCK.

You have not treated Chriſtianity as if you wiſhed to ſerve its cauſe; for there is an air of levity (endeavoured indeed to be diſguiſed and ſuppreſſed, but yet frequently diſcernible) which in general runs through your work; and there are many hints thrown out (cautiouſly, it is true, and covertly)

vertly) of doubt, which ſerve to weaken the cauſe you are defending.

MR. JENYNS.

You will oblige me with inſtances of theſe arts. I know you do not expect to be credited upon the authority of your aſſertion.

SHERLOCK.

To give inſtances of your eaſy levity, were to quote too large a portion of your book; yet two or three of them I will give you. Speaking of the rewards of Chriſtianity, you ſay, "Previous to the "preaching of Chriſt and his apoſtles, no "ſuch *prize was ever hung out* to man-"kind*." Do you, Sir, mention Heaven in the ſame terms as you would a laced hat or a ſaddle at a boxing-match or a foot-race? And yet this phraſe, this de-

* P. 20.

grading

grading, contemptuous phraſe, you are ſo fond of as to repeat a few leaves farther.

MR. JENYNS.

Surely it were to examine too minutely thus to catch at words; which might not be intended in the light you view them, but ſhould be conſidered as merely incorrect, and ſuch as might fall from the graveſt pen.

SHERLOCK.

Improbable as it is, it may be poſſible; but from light words I will paſs to higher ſentences, of which, to me at leaſt, the whole firſt propoſition is compoſed: you there ſit down to argue, with a moſt affected gravity of countenance, that there is now *extant a book called the New Teſtament*; which is juſt as wiſe an undertaking as to prove, with formal reaſoning, that one is one,

one, and that two and two make four *.— "Very little need be ſaid to eſtabliſh!"— Yes, truly, very little indeed; and yet you have expended nearly ſix pages upon the ſubject; one † of which is wholly taken up in enumerating, with moſt minute particularity, all the objections againſt the validity of this book, which you could poſſibly think of: and not one of them have you troubled yourſelf to anſwer.

MR. JENYNS.

That would have been to wander from the point.

SHERLOCK.

Perhaps ſo; but ſurely it was much more wandering from the point to propoſe them at all. If your heart was friendly to the cauſe of Chriſtianity, how could you take the pains (for I am ſure it muſt coſt

* P. 11. † P. 15.

no

no little pains) to recollect this ſceptical detail?—" with which," you very coolly add, " you ſhall not contend."—All that you aſſert (good man!) is a plain fact which cannot be denied, that—*when the ſun paſſes over the meridian it is noon-day*—" that ſuch writings do now exiſt."—Much in the ſame ſtrain, but conveying ſtill more ludicrous ideas, do you conclude your ſecond propoſition: " Of theſe facts " no man who has eyes to read, or ears to " hear, can entertain a doubt; becauſe—" there are the books, and in them is this " religion."—Juſt in the light ſtyle of the juggler's addreſs—*Lookye, gentlemen, all is fair;—you cannot be deceived—becauſe—here are my cups, and in them are the balls.*

MR. JENYNS.

Surely you ſtrangely pervert my meaning.

SHER-

SHERLOCK.

If I do, it is not intentionally: I ſpeak but the dictates of my own mind—the natural thoughts which firſt ſtruck me on ſeeing theſe paſſages.

MR. JENYNS.

But is it not uſual, with accurate reaſoners, to lay down certain ſelf-evident propoſitions as foundations for their future arguments? And is it not a ſure and reaſonable method?

SHERLOCK.

Yes; but if they are ſelf-evident, why ſit down to prove them? This is an abſurdity peculiar to the philoſophers of the preſent age, and well has a late ingenious writer expoſed it*. If the attempt be ſerious, it ſerves only to perplex and con-

* Dr. Beattie.

found

found our ideas; if otherwiſe, it is a ſpecies of humour moſt miſerably miſplaced on an important ſubject; and, in either caſe, is utterly unjuſtifiable. But let theſe obſervations ſuffice for the ſubject of levity; I will next point out ſome hints of doubt which you interſperſed, and which ſerve to weaken the cauſe you profeſs to defend. I paſs by three ſlight hints in the firſt five pages of your book, to come to the following: "I will venture to affirm, that Chriſ-"tianity is not the offspring of fraud or "fiction; ſuch, on a ſuperficial view, I "know it muſt appear to any man of good "ſenſe *." And will you venture to affirm the latter part of this ſentence, as well as the former? Surely this is expreſſed in a moſt unguarded manner. I, on the other hand, will venture to affirm, that Chriſtianity, even on the ſlighteſt and

* P. 6.

moſt

moſt ſuperficial view, cannot appear the offspring of fraud or fiction to any man of common ſenſe*. A ſuperficial view is the utmoſt that a vaſt majority of mankind can poſſibly give to their religion; and ſo forcible is its power, and ſo clear its native beauty, that to ſuch a view, as well as to the moſt accurate, it will appear in the genuine luſtre of unſullied truth. In another place you ſay, "Theſe are all plain facts, too "glaring to be contradicted; and therefore, "whatever we may think of the authority "of the books, the relations which they "contain, or the inſpiration of the authors, "of theſe facts no man, who hath eyes to "read, or ears to hear, can entertain a "doubt†." What a mixture does this ſentence contain! what inſinuations, unfriendly to the Chriſtian cauſe, are here thrown out! and merely for the ſake of

* See p. 184 of Mr. Jenyns's Book. † P. 49.

what

what you beſt know, for I will not pretend to ſay.—" Whatever we may think!"—Why, Sir, let me aſk you, did you inſert theſe hints in the body of a ſentence which required them not?

MR. JENYNS.

It appeared to me that the ſentence did require them.

SHERLOCK.

It could require them for no good end: it is complete without them. But you have a happy art, an unhappy I ſhould ſay, of throwing cold water upon a glowing flame, and of expreſſing yourſelf as if you feared to convince too much: this appears ſtrongly in the ſentences I have quoted; and ſometimes a ſlight word or two (which on a curſory view might paſs unnoticed, but when again conſidered

cannot but be obſerved) thrown in as it were careleſsly, ſhall weaken the aim of a ſentence which without it were excellent. What can we think of the words which cloſe the following aſſertion? "It is well "worth every man's while, who either is "or intends to be virtuous, to believe "Chriſtianity, *if he can**." If he can!—Where was the neceſſity for theſe words, or what was the purpoſe of them, unleſs to inſinuate that it was very poſſible that he *could not* believe it?

MR. JENYNS.

I am ſurpriſed to find that the inſtances you have given ſhould be underſtood in the light you repreſent them. The generality of my readers view them not thus; if they had, my book would never have met with ſuch general applauſe.

* P. 113.

SHER-

SHERLOCK.

I grant it: and the proof you bring that your readers, in general, have not thus underſtood you, is very ſtrong; but for this many reaſons may be given. Faſhion, extending itſelf in circles far and wide from the center of the court, would have a mighty influence; and a curſory manner of reading, your eaſy and ſpecious manner of writing, your profeſſions of conviction, all conſpire to account for the favourable reception your book has met with; but if the quick-eyed deiſt or eager libertine view theſe paſſages in the light in which, indeed, I think, they naturally preſent themſelves, will they not with reaſon deem you the friend of their cauſe, and triumph in the diſcovery?

MR. JENYNS.

How that may be, I pretend not to ſay; I am, however, willing to abide by the conſequences. But will you now point out to me how, and where, I have argued weakly?—I may have done it, perhaps; but, at preſent, I am not conſcious of it.

SHERLOCK.

In your third propoſition, where you treat diffuſely on the ſubject of falſe and fictitious virtues, there is an unaccountable mixture of truth and falſehood: the truth and ſound reaſoning are what might have been expected from you; but the falſehood and weak arguing are matters of ſurpriſe in a profeſſed friend, and one who is ſo very capable of better things. You juſtly obſerve, that Chriſtianity has neglected the falſe virtues of heatheniſm, and delivered many new and excellent precepts. This

undoubted truth you have endeavoured to prove by ſome undeniable inſtances; but you have thrown in others utterly falſe, and added arguments contemptibly weak.

MR. JENYNS.

I wait to hear them produced.

SHERLOCK.

Yes; and to hear them with the ſame *ſang froid* with which you wrote them. You converſe with me in the ſame ſpirit in which you write; but I wonder not at it—it is natural. After having juſtly degraded valour from the rank of Chriſtian virtues, as being merely the effect of animal ſpirits, you proceed to lower patriotiſm and friendſhip in the ſame manner. And firſt beſtowing a ſneer * of contempt upon the love of our country, you proceed to declare, that this

* P. 58.

virtue " counteracts the extenſive benevo-
" lence of the Chriſtian religion;" an aſ-
ſertion utterly falſe and unjuſtifiable, and which, if allowed good, would, in its extenſive progreſs, diſſolve the cloſeſt ties of nature——

> The relations dear, and all the charities
> Of father, ſon, and brother—

would prove, that the care and love of a man's family (which yet whoever neglects, is *worſe than an infidel* *) are incompatible with Chriſtian benevolence. That country in which a man is born, which ſupports him by equal government, and defends his life and property with its juſt laws, is, in a larger view, his family—his more extended relationſhip—and he cannot but love it as much in preference above other countries, as he does his own particular family above other families around him;—yes, and

* 1 Tim. v. 8.

with

with a love as juſtifiable by the laws of religion and reaſon. "Chriſtianity," you ſay, "commands us to love all mankind"—And you ſay true; but when you add, that "patriotiſm commands us to oppreſs all other "countries to advance the imaginary proſperity of our own," you add what is palpably falſe. Where is the patriotiſm which avows ſo vile a principle? The ſavage *amor patriæ* of ancient Rome might and did avow it; but that love of our country, which has ever glowed in the boſom of Britons, rejects the aſſertion as a mean and deſpicable calumny.

MR. JENYNS.

It ſhould ſeem, then, that I am miſtaken in my idea of patriotiſm; will you give me juſter notions of it?

SHERLOCK.

Patriotiſm is a reſolute defence of our country againſt wrong and oppreſſion: it will not, as you unjuſtly inſinuate, ſeek occaſion, regardleſs of right or wrong, to oppreſs and trample upon other countries, but is reſolved to defend, and, as far as in its power, prevent the ruin of its own; and this juſt reſolution ſprings from that ſame love which a man bears to his own family, extended to his own country; and to tell a man that he muſt not love his country above other countries, is as great an abſurdity, as if you gravely informed him, that he muſt not love his own family more than other families. This juſt idea of it will ſerve to expoſe the futility of your aſſertion, that "patriotiſm commands us to "oppreſs all other countries to advance the "imaginary proſperity of our own;"—for with equal juſtice might you urge, that a love

love of our family commands us to oppreſs all other families to advance the imaginary proſperity of our own. The latter may be the wiſdom, and the former the glory, of a vain and wicked world; but neither of them are derived from the ſacred fountains of love of our families and love of our country, which are, in fact, one and the ſame thing, and toward both which we are held in the tendereſt ties by the precepts of Chriſtianity.

MR. JENYNS.

If I am thus miſtaken on the ſubject of patriotiſm—for that of friendſhip I have ſurely laid a firmer foundation.

SHERLOCK.

Nay; but no foundation at all: I can conceive you to be perfectly in earneſt on the ſubject of patriotiſm, and I *will* ſuppoſe the

the ſame ſincerity in what you ſay of friendſhip: but it is matter of aſtoniſhment to me to obſerve you ſaying, "that friend-"ſhip could gain no admittance to the "precepts of Chriſtianity, nor meet with "recommendation from it," when it is both recommended by example, and enforced by precept. I preſume you will not ſay, that becauſe the word Friendſhip is not particularly mentioned, the thing itſelf is no where enforced: but if words may be allowed to convey any meaning, can any expreſſions more forcibly inculcate friendſhip than ſuch as theſe: "Love as bre-"thren *." "Let brotherly love conti-"nue †." "Let love be without diſſimu-"lation ‡." "Let us not love in word "and in tongue, but in deed and in truth §." You will, perhaps, ſay, that theſe expreſ-

* 1 Pet. iii. 8. † Heb. xiii. 1.
‡ Rom. xii. 9. § 1 John iii. 18.

ſions

ſions are to be underſtood in the extenſive ſenſe of comprehending all the world; what then can we think of the following pathetic wiſh: "The Lord make you to "increaſe and abound in love one towards "another, and towards all the world *!"— What deſpicable tautology is this, if the firſt part of the ſentence means the ſame as the laſt; if the words *one towards another* be underſtood as reſpecting all mankind, and not as relative to the particular ties ariſing from intimate affection, and (if you will allow the expreſſion) friendſhip! But the thing is too plain to require a further proof: the Chriſtian religion enjoins friendſhip in the moſt affectionate terms, as well as recommends it by the practice of its firſt and trueſt votaries. In what light can we regard the affection of our Redeemer for the beloved apoſtle, but

* 1 Theſſ. iii. 12.

that

that of friendſhip? not to mention that he calls all of them *his friends**. How ſtrong an example of friendſhip does St. Paul ſhew to Barnabas and Timothy! and with what tenderneſs does he expreſs a more than common regard to Philemon, as well as affection for Oneſimus!

MR. JENYNS.

I am, it ſeems, unfortunate in two of my inſtances of falſe virtue out of three: valour, then, is the only fictitious one which may be allowed with reaſon to be fictitious, and to be overlooked by the Chriſtian religion.

SHERLOCK.

What think you, Sir, of that affected contempt of pain as an evil, which you know ranked high in the eſtimation of the

* John xv. 14, 15.

haughty

haughty Romans? You well know its proud and unnatural dictates; the high veneration it claimed and received, as well as how little it deſerved the ſmalleſt ſhare of reſpect; and yet this was the virtue taught by philoſophers, and cultivated by ſenators and heroes—the boaſt and bane of Brutus and of Cato. This proud virtue could find no place among the meek and humble dictates of Chriſtianity; which taught a reſignation under afflictions, upon different principles from the Stoic, and built the Chriſtian's contempt of pain and death upon the firm foundation of a happy immortality. This vain and empty ſtoiciſm I expected to have found pointed out by you, as one of the firſt in the catalogue of falſe virtues; and well was your elegant pen qualified to expoſe its flimſy colouring.

Be this, however, as it may: let me next deſire you to conſider the manner in which

which you have treated the new precepts inculcated by Chriſtianity: the firſt of theſe is humility—a terrible ſtumbling-block in the way of modern deiſts, and which you chuſe to ſtyle *poorneſs of ſpirit*. You are not to be told, that theſe words, however good their real meaning, convey to the generality of readers a mean and deſpicable idea; they ought therefore to be avoided: but you ſeem to be particularly fond of them, and very frequently repeat them. Surely there never were two ſtranger ſentences on one and the ſame ſubject, than the following: "By poorneſs of ſpirit is "to be underſtood a diſpoſition of mind, "meek, humble, ſubmiſſive to power, and "void of ambition *."—"Pride was not "made for man, but humility, meekneſs, "and reſignation; that is, poorneſs of ſpirit." What chiming, and changing, and repeat-

* P. 64.

ing

ing is here! Will this repreſentation of a Chriſtian virtue, think ye, ſerve the Chriſtian cauſe? Is it ſerious? Well; be it ſo: I only obſerve, that in Mr. Hume, the enemy of Chriſtianity, who ſpeaks in much the ſame ſtrain of the ſame virtue, ſuch ſolemn ridicule might be natural; but in you, a profeſſed friend, I cannot think it ſuch a ſtrain of expreſſion as might have been expected.

MR. JENYNS.

You ſeem to have expected much and to have been much diſappointed; but by endeavouring to diſprove what I have ſaid, do you not argue againſt thoſe Chriſtian virtues which I have produced?

SHERLOCK.

As to what I expected, I own my expectations were high, from a ſenſe of your

great merit and enlarged capacity. What my diſappointment was, may then naturally be conceived. You aſk me, however, a queſtion which, I own, ſeems fairly to ariſe from what I have ſaid. But you laid me under a difficulty, by intermixing objectible and allowable paſſages ſo artfully and effectually, that it is no eaſy matter to root up the tares without hazarding the wheat alſo: this in an enemy would be deemed artful; in a friend it muſt, at leaſt, be looked upon as careleſs. Thus, in the very next particular of forgiveneſs of injuries, you make many juſt and excellent obſervations, but ſupport them at the ſame time with ſuch extravagant falſehoods *(non tali auxilio, nec defenſoribus iſtis)* as muſt injure the cauſe you profeſs to ſerve. You ſay, that "the wiſeſt moraliſts "of the wiſeſt nations and ages repreſent-"ed the deſire of revenge as a mark of a

"noble

"noble mind." Now here I will venture to affirm, that you muſt know to the contrary: how then could you ſay this? You are, I am ſure, well enough acquainted with the Greek and Roman writers, to know, that if ſome repreſented things as you repreſent them, others, and thoſe of the higheſt character, ſpoke a very different language.

Chryſippus non dicet idem, nec mite Thaletis
Ingenium *.

To this, you know, Juvenal bears witneſs in the ſtrongeſt terms; and immediately after adds, as his own opinion, an expreſs contradiction to what you aſſert,

Semper et infirmi eſt animi, exiguique, voluptas
Ultio.

And you are not unacquainted with the ſpirit of Epictetus, whoſe conſtant precept

* Juvenal. Sat. xiii.

was, *Bear and forbear*; and who, in his book of morals *, expreſsly treats of the meanneſs of revenge. Now, what poſſible good end can it anſwer, to urge a falſehood in ſupport of a good cauſe?

MR. JENYNS.

None, I muſt confeſs.

SHERLOCK.

Why then did you urge it? And certainly every perſon who is acquainted with the authors above mentioned, muſt either wonder at your careleſſneſs in overlooking ſuch paſſages, or your weakneſs in attributing falſe doctrines to the writers. Thus too, you ſay, in direct oppoſition to the truth, that "the moſt celebrated virtues of "the ancients were, high ſpirit, intrepid "courage, and implacable reſentment;" adding, that

* Book ii. c. 10. § 5.

Impiger,

Impiger, iracundus, inexorabilis, acer,

" was the portrait of the moſt illuſtrious " hero, drawn by one of the firſt poets of " antiquity." Now, implacable reſentment was not one of the moſt celebrated virtues of antiquity; for it was no virtue at all: and you muſt very well know, that the chief deſign of Homer, by and through his whole poem, was to ſhew the miſchiefs of an implacable reſentment, and to brand it as a crime of the deepeſt die.

MR. JENYNS.

I own you have pointed out many particulars which I overlooked; but ſtill the general tenor of what I have ſaid on the ſubject of the new precepts of Chriſtianity is juſt: and ſuch is the ſuperior excellence of the Chriſtian religion.

SHERLOCK.

To me you will not think it neceſſary to urge its ſuperior excellence, which, I preſume, you are ſenſible needs not be ſupported at the expence of truth. And yet of this unjuſtifiable method you have given another remarkable inſtance, in a long and warm paſſage, wherein you aſſert, that Brutus and Cato were inferior in virtue to Meſſalina and Heliogabalus: you remember it, I dare ſay *. It is too long to quote; but the plain and evident meaning of it is, that the perſons who are engaged in the practice of vices, which they know to be vices, are *more admiſſible into the kingdom of heaven*, than the perſons who are engaged in the practice of falſe, which yet they believe to be real, virtues.

* P. 91.

MR.

MR. JENYNS.

I ſpeak but the doctrine of Chriſt, who ſays, that "the publicans and harlots enter the kingdom of heaven before the Phariſees."

SHERLOCK.

I believe, indeed, that you had that text in mind when you penned the above extraordinary aſſertion. But you know the reaſon given is, the repentance of ſuch ſinners; to which they would ſooner be moved than the proud and ſelf-ſufficient Phariſee. Now the caſe of the Epicure and ſtrumpet, whom you tacitly and comparatively applaud, is evidently different; and your aſſertion againſt Brutus and Cato may be overturned by a ſentence of our Redeemer, much more to the purpoſe of the ſubject before us: "And that ſervant which knew

" his maſter's will, and prepared not him-
" ſelf, neither did according to his will,
" ſhall be beaten with many ſtripes; but
" he that knew it not, and yet did commit
" things worthy of ſtripes, ſhall be beaten
" with few ſtripes *." Heliogabalus and Meſſalina were brutes, and they knew that they were brutes, in vice; Brutus and Cato were the votaries of falſe, but they knew not that it was falſe, virtue: how much ſuperior in excellence they were, then, to the monſters whom you have thought fit to repreſent as more admiſſible into heaven, in the horrid and fantaſtic dreſs of all *their profligacy about them*, cool and unprejudiced reaſon will in one moment determine.

MR. JENYNS.

Ere this ſubject is diſmiſſed, I beg leave to recapitulate, in order to be underſtood,

* Luke xii. 47, 48.

" I mean

"I mean not to paſs any cenſure on the "principles of valour, patriotiſm, or ho- "nour; they may be uſeful, perhaps ne- "ceſſary, in the commerce and buſineſs of "this turbulent and imperfect ſtate; and "thoſe who are actuated by them may be "virtuous, honeſt, and even religious men: "all that I aſſert is, that they cannot be "Chriſtians †.

SHERLOCK.

And is this all that you aſſert? How modeſt!—On the contrary, I aſſert, that the man of valour, or active courage, may be a very good Chriſtian, if he does not exert his ſpirit in an improper manner, and on improper occaſions. His courage, it is true, ariſes from the ſame animal ſpirits as animate the ſturdy maſtiff, or the horſe that neighs for the battle; it is, as you

† P. 93.

juſtly obſerve, conſtitutional. Forgive him this fault of his nature, but do not deprive him of his Chriſtianity. And, again, on the point of patriotiſm, I aſſert, that a man may love his country, and yet be a very good Chriſtian; nay, he cannot be a good Chriſtian without it, any more than he can without a love for his family—and both for one and the ſame reaſon. But this I have before conſidered; and as I apprehend that I weary you with continued diſapprobation, I will, for a while, change the ſcene, and relieve you by paying that juſt tribute of commendation, which, on ſome occaſions, you well deſerve.

MR. JENYNS.

If I may flatter myſelf that any applauſe is due——

SHER-

SHERLOCK.

Yes; ſome is due for the modeſty * and goodneſs of your deſign, however executed. The internal evidences of the Chriſtian religion, which you have produced, are great and ſtrong, and in many places well ſupported: you have ſtruck out a beautiful thought, why religion was not delivered ſyſtematically †; and your proof of that common principle, that the preſent life is only a ſtate of probation, is new and uncommon ‡;—it is worthy of you, as pleading the ſacred cauſe of Chriſtianity, and is well conducted, expreſſive, ſtrong, and convincing. Your comment on ſeveral beauties of ſcripture §, which you have ſelected, is good, and animated with a warmth that the divine ſubject naturally calls for; and

* P. 8—23.
† P. 181.
‡ P. 24.
§ P. 37, &c.

your

your reaſons why forgiveneſs of injuries is a noble virtue, are ſuch as carry conviction with them, and muſt carry it to the moſt implacable breaſt. The new birth †, which enthuſiaſts had miſerably wreſted from its original meaning, you have placed in that clear and rational light which was intended by its divine Author. And the ſubject of faith, on which volumes have been written, ſerving more to perplex than ſatisfy the mind, a few pages ‡ of yours have done clear juſtice to, and pointed out with moſt expreſſive propriety its moral nature.

MR. JENYNS.

You ſeem to pauſe; and it is but time: indeed you have ſelected ſo many paſſages to commend, that I almoſt forget your former diſapprobation.

† P. 77. ‡ P. 82, &c.

SHER-

SHERLOCK.

Juſtice is ſurely due, as well on the ſide of applauſe, as on that of diſapprobation.

MR. JENYNS.

But I have, you ſay, furniſhed deiſts with unanſwered arguments: I confeſs I know of none ſuch.

SHERLOCK.

I will mention only one, where * more might be produced; but that one is laid down with ſuch minute exactneſs, pointed to with ſo extended a finger, that it ſhould ſeem as if you were exceedingly unwilling it ſhould be overlooked. The paſſage † is too long to quote; but you will inſtantly

* As in p. 84.—And of that numerous train of objections which are produced and anſwered, from p. 115. to the 180th, it cannot but be obſerved, that many of them are propoſed with much greater force than the anſwers are given with.

† P. 30, 31, &c.

recollect

recollect it when I tell you, that you have introduced it with a moſt abſurd and falſe objection; and which, ſurely, none ever did or ever could make; and then you add, "that they ſhould reverſe their argument, "and give it"—in a manner which you give for them—with a cautious particularity; concluding with an obſervation, that "this "would be an argument worthy of ra- "tional deiſts, and demand a reſpectful "attention."——Yes, and not only that, but it is an argument which not one deiſt in a thouſand would have thought of but for you; and undoubtedly you receive their thanks for furniſhing them with it. Upon this ſubject I will only obſerve, that it is not uſual with a warm friend to furniſh enemies with weapons, which might wound the cauſe they wiſh to ſerve.

MR. JENYNS.

I muſt confeſs that this converſation has ſurpriſed me extremely: ſo little did I imagine that I ſhould be ſuſpected of coldneſs in the cauſe of Chriſtianity, I even aſſured myſelf that my work would be looked upon "as the work of ſome en-" thuſiaſt or methodiſt *, ſome beggar, or " ſome madman."

SHERLOCK.

Indeed you need be under no apprehenſions of that ſort, for they are very idle ones. No man in his ſober ſenſes will ever miſtake you for an enthuſiaſt, or methodiſt; ſuch ſpirits write not in the ſtrain of your work: nor are there in it more marks of poverty or of madneſs—there is too much livelineſs for a mind depreſſed with pover-

* P. 189.

ty,

ty, and too much connection for one warped with madneſs. You might, therefore, have ſpared your aſſurances, that the "author is very far removed from all theſe "characters."

MR. JENYNS.

Well—of all theſe things the world will judge; and I apprehend, that what I have ſaid will have the good effect to convince infidels, "that, notwithſtanding all "unfavourable appearances, Chriſtianity "may not be altogether artifice *."

SHERLOCK.

Unfavourable appearances! and not *altogether* artifice!—What expreſſions!—and from the mouth of a friend!—But be it ſo—I forbear any further obſervations on this extraordinary ſtrain—as indeed I ſhall on

* P. 188.

many

many other particulars, which might be obſerved and enlarged upon in your work, to come to one paſſage, with my thoughts on which I ſhall relieve your wearied attention by concluding my viſit.

MR. JENYNS.

Oh, no:—by all means favour me with every objectible particular.

SHERLOCK.

Indeed *the time would fail me to tell of* your large and unwarrantable grants to infidels and deiſts *, and your no leſs unjuſtifiable concluſions drawn from thoſe grants; —or your (what name ſhall I give to ſuch—) expreſſions on St. Paul's ſhipwreck, his cloke, his parchments;—or your obſervations on government †;—or your ſaying,

* P. 124.

† P. 134. "Government," ſays Mr. Jenyns, "cannot be ma-
" naged without certain degrees of violence, *corruption*, and
" impoſition."

ing, that "perpetual patience under injuries and insults, must every day provoke new insults and new injuries *," in direct contradiction to what you before, with greater truth, asserted, "that such a disposition would, at last, conquer the most obdurate hearts, and we should have no enemies to forgive †."—Why should I remark your oblique hint on "the want of irresistible evidence ‡," or your observation, that "a state of mental and bodily perfection seems, to our ignorance, to be more consistent with justice and

"imposition."——Exactly in the strain of a courtier in one of Fielding's excellent moral-histories—"Do you not know, "Doctor, that this is as corrupt a nation as ever existed under "the sun? And would you think of governing such a na"tion by the strict principles of honesty and morality?"—*Amelia*, b. ii. c. 2.

* P. 135.

† P. 70. Indeed the whole chapter from which the above is quoted, is as well an inimitable picture of *matters political*, as a complete illustration of our Author's doctrine.

‡ P. 157.

"reason:"

" reaſon §!"—or your aſſertion (for it is in fact no leſs), that the " majority of man-" kind can form no other idea of this re-" velation, than that of a confuſed rhap-" ſody of fictions and abſurdities."

MR. JENYNS.

Here are heads enow, ſurely, to frame a *diſcourſe* upon of no moderate length; but if I am not to be obliged with it, I muſt ſubmit. I can only ſay, that it is ſtill my opinion (and, I think, I have proved it), that " if there were a few more true " Chriſtians in the world, it would be be-" neficial to themſelves, and by no means " detrimental to the public *."

SHERLOCK.

Spoken in the very ſpirit, as well as in the very words, which you have written! —words the moſt remarkable, ſurely, that

§ P. 174. * Ad fin.

ever were ſpoken or written. Indeed they conſtitute that very paſſage with which I juſt now declared I would conclude my viſit.—Hear me then, Mr. Jenyns, and with patience:—you have written a ſenſible treatiſe on the Chriſtian religion, to which religion you have profeſſed yourſelf a friend: I muſt believe your profeſſions. In your work there are many excellent things, well worthy your great underſtanding, and in it there are many as utterly unworthy. A ſtrange and unaccountable mixture! But had you concluded the whole with ſome earneſtneſs, preſſed it upon the heart of your reader with a becoming ſpirit and gravity (you will not ſuſpect me of pleading for looſe and unmeaning declamation), it would have ſeemed more like conviction, and have appeared to flow from the heart. Whereas, on the contrary, you have drawn up your concluſion with ſo little force, ſuch faint

and unergetic liſtleſſneſs, as if you were very little intereſted in your reader's belief of the premiſes. "If there were a few "more true Chriſtians in the world, it "would be more beneficial to themſelves, "and by no means detrimental to the pub-"lic."—Cold, careleſs, and unanimated! and on ſuch a ſubject!—You could but ſpeak in a ſtrain like this, when drawing on your ſhoe—"If it were a little larger "acroſs, it would be of more ſervice to "me, and by no means troubleſome to the "foot."

No man, when reaſoning on a great and important ſubject, ſhould intermix a declamatory earneſtneſs in the courſe of his argument, nor attempt to move the paſſions, while he ſhould convince the underſtanding: but when he has propoſed and proved his arguments with ſtrength and clearneſs, then not to enforce them with a juſt and

heart-felt warmth, appears affected, indifferent, and unnatural:—unnatural, ſurely! for if the head and heart go together in the cauſe of religion, both will exert themſelves with equal force, each in their proper place, the one in the courſe, and the other in the concluſion, of the work.

It was not with this cold indifference that I enforced the divine truths of Chriſtianity, after I had endeavoured to prove them;—no, I preſſed them home to the heart of the Deiſt, which I wiſhed to warm, to animate, and alarm. In a ſtrong apoſtrophe, I directed him to go to his natural religion †, bid him compare the true prophet with the falſe, and then ſay which is the prophet of God:—I urged him to mark the expreſſive anſwer which Nature gave, when viewing the ſcene of the crucifixion, through the eyes of the centurion

† Sherlock's Sermons, vol. i. p. 271.

who

who attended at the croſs—how ſtrongly by him ſhe ſpoke, and ſaid, *Truly this man was the ſon of God.*

Here was warmth and energy, which flowed, and which ſeemed to flow, from the heart. Had I urged this compariſon in a cold and unaffecting manner—had I concluded it with aſſuring the Deiſt, that "a "little conviction, ariſing from this com- "pariſon, would be beneficial to himſelf, "and by no means detrimental to the pub- "lic," I ſhould have thought, and not have been ſurpriſed if others had thought, that I had betrayed the cauſe which yet I wiſhed to ſerve.

DIALOGUE VI.

COWLEY—Dr. HURD.

COWLEY.

—LIFE's a name
That nothing here can truly claim;
This wretched inn, where ye ſcarce ſtay to bait,
Ye call your dwelling-place,
Ye call one ſtep a race;
But angels, in their full-enlightened ſtate,
Angels, who live and know what 'tis to be,
Who all the weakneſs of your language ſee,
Who ſpeak things, and your words, their ill-drawn pictures, ſcorn;
When ye, by a fooliſh figure, ſay,
Behold an old man dead!—then they
Speak properly, and cry—*Behold a man child born!*
My eyes are opened, and I ſee
Thro' the *tranſparent* fallacy.

DR. HURD.

Seraphic ſtrains!—What is it I hear?

Auditis? an me ludit amabilis
Inſania!——

Such ſtrains they ſeem, as my favourite Cowley *would have* ſung——

COWLEY.

Yes; they are ſeraphic ſtrains—and ſuch as your favourite Cowley *did* ſing, and you, in your well-intended, though ill-conducted, edition of my works *did* omit.

DR. HURD.

I thought, oh gentle ſhade of the moſt excellent of men! to do a ſervice to your fame by the freedom I preſumed to take with you.

COWLEY.

I know you did:—but ſurely in omitting the noble poem *on Life*, whence theſe lines

are quoted, as well as ſome others which I could mention to you, you little conſulted that exquiſite taſte, of which you are ſo complete and acknowledged a maſter.

DR. HURD.

It much concerns me to find that I have omitted any parts of your works which would have done honour to your name. This, which I have juſt heard, is certainly of that number; you ſaid you could mention ſome others: would you direct me to them——

COWLEY.

There lies the folio edition of my works, I ſee:—What do you read at the bottom of the ſixty-fifth page?

DR. HURD.

Hope, of all ills that men endure
The only cheap and univerſal cure!

Thou

Thou captive's freedom, and thou ſick man's
health!
Thou loſer's vict'ry, and thou beggar's wealth!
Thou manna, which from heaven we eat,
To every taſte a ſeveral meat!
Thou ſtrong retreat! thou ſure entail'd eſtate,
Which nought has power to alienate!
Thou pleaſant, honeſt flatterer!—for none
Flatter unhappy men, but thou alone.

2.

Hope, thou firſt fruits of Happineſs,
Thou gentle dawning of a bright ſucceſs!

COWLEY.

What is your opinion of theſe lines?

DR. HURD.

I think them, as indeed every man muſt, exquiſite.

COWLEY.

Why then omit them?

DR.

DR. HURD.

I apprehended that there would have been an impropriety——

COWLEY.

I gueſs at the delicacy † of your reaſons;—but you ſee what a diamond had been loſt to the world, if only thoſe were to be ſeen which you have thought proper to ſet round my picture.

DR. HURD.

In the next edition I will take care to have theſe lines inſerted, and will ſearch with a more accurate eye for others equally agreeable.

COWLEY.

Next edition!—My dear Sir, I apprehend a next edition will never appear.

† Theſe lines on Hope are extracted from *Cowley*'s love-verſes, entitled the *Miſtreſs*.

DR.

DR. HURD.

Why ſhould we apprehend that? "Every "thing you wrote (pardon the freedom) is "either ſo good or ſo bad, that in all rea- "ſon a ſeparation ſhould be made, leſt the "latter, which is unhappily the greater "part, ſhould in the end ſtifle and overlay "the former."

COWLEY.

Time, I preſume, has given an anſwer to your queſtion; and what you aſſert reſts, I aſſure you, on no good foundation: but even ſuppoſe it did, the inference you draw from it does not reaſonably follow; there is no fear leſt the one ſhould overwhelm and ſink the other in oblivion.

DR. HURD.

I own to you, my fears of that ſort made me deſirous to preſent the world with

with a *perfect* image of Mr. Cowley's genius.

COWLEY.

Whoever thinks a faultleſs work to ſee,
Thinks what ne'er was, nor is, nor e'er ſhall be.

Perfection is not to be expected in a human compoſition; nor indeed (for that reaſon, I preſume) is it deſired. I believe I ſpeak the general ſenſe of mankind when I aſſure you, that my voluminous works, which were ſent into the world,

With all their imperfections on their head,

were more agreeable than the two ſpruce volumes which you formed out of them. If here and there a few leſs excellent pieces appeared, they were but like moles on an elegant form, which rather added to, than detracted from, the beauty of the whole. And that whole compoſed an agreeable work, to which even thoſe leſs perfect

pieces

pieces contributed (if I may be allowed the expreſſion) their ſhare of perfection. Your very miſtake, however, is amiable, and ſprung (as all your actions do) from an amiable motive. My acknowledgments are due, therefore, to your intention, however blameable your execution of it may be.

But I quit you, with the aſſurance that your Πλεον ημισυ παντος is exceedingly miſapplied;—that you have (however contrary to your gentle nature it may ſeem) repreſented me not unlike Deïphobus in the poet, whoſe *ſacred work ſhall only die with* an expiring world †;

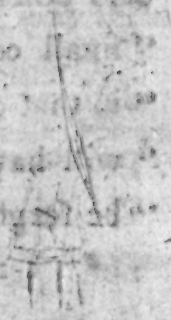
† Theſe words allude to the moſt delicate compliment ſurely that ever was penned, and which Mr. Cowley pays to Virgil. It is to be found in a noble Pindaric Ode on the Reſurrection.

——All gentle notes be drown'd
In the laſt trumpet's dreadful ſound;
That to the ſpheres themſelves ſhall ſilence bring,
Untune the univerſal ſtring.
Then all the wide-extended ſky,
And all th' harmonious worlds on high,
And Virgil's ſacred work ſhall die.

——Lacerum

——Lacerum crudeliter ora
Ora, manuſque ambas, populataque tempora raptis
Auribus, et truncas inhoneſto vulnere nares;

that the rough bookſellers in the beginning of this century, did me truer juſtice in the following ſentence, "We dare not ſay the "poems are equally perfect, yet certainly "they are ſuch as deſerve not to be buried "in obſcurity," than that poliſhed editor who obſerves, "that it is enough if this "ſmall collection go down to poſterity: "in that caſe, neither they nor the author "will have any great loſs, though the reſt "be forgotten."



DIALOGUE VII.

Mr. ADDISON—Dr. JOHNSON.

JOHNSON.

"WE pronounce the name of Cato, "but we think on that of Addi-"ſon *."——There is a ſomething in the delicate morality of Addiſon, which approximates too much to effeminacy, and ill accords with my ſterner genius:—I cannot, therefore, forbear an occaſional reflection of ſeverity on his memory.

ADDISON.

"Fierce Reproach, which drives the guilty "with his ſcorpion-whip over rocks and

* Johnſon's Preface to Shakeſpeare.

" precipices, is not of ſuch effectual ſer-
" vice as delicate Reproof, which corrects
" with ſmiling affability."

JOHNSON.

Who tells me ſo?

ADDISON.

Addiſon himſelf.

JOHNSON.

Indeed!—Illuſtrious ſhade!—It is with almoſt reluctant gratitude that I receive the honour of this viſit;—and ill do I deſerve it, who but now——

ADDISON.

Say nothing of " but now:"—I never harboured reſentment, and now I know it not. The intereſts of virtue, which you are ſo well able to ſerve, induce me to lament both your defection from them, and your

your choice to ramble in the thorny paths of party. But it is no part of the deſign of this addreſs, to concern myſelf with the merit or demerit of your preſent choice; the mean concerns of party are now beneath my notice. The great and intereſting calls of virtue alone will awaken the attention of an immortal and unbodied ſpirit.

JOHNSON.

To what would all this tend? How, or in what inſtances, have I deviated from the intereſts of virtue?

ADDISON.

In neglecting to promote them;—in leaving the path of occaſional eſſays in which you firſt trod, an eminent, and frequently an excellent moraliſt, to wander in inſipid accounts of Scotch expeditions, or in the ſtill more inſipid tranſactions of——

JOHNSON.

Mean you this in alluſion to my Rambler?

ADDISON.

I do;—the merits of which are great; but maturer judgment, and a further progreſs in the ſame path, would have taught you to alter the uncouth dreſs of your expreſſion, and to poliſh the rugged ſeverity of your thoughts.

JOHNSON.

Uncouth dreſs of my expreſſion!—I confeſs I did not expect this;—I took ſome pains in the ſtyle of thoſe papers, and aſſume the vanity to ſay, that "I have la-
"boured to refine our language—and ſome-
"thing, perhaps, I have added to the
"elegance of its conſtruction, and ſome-
"thing to the harmony of its cadence.
"When common words were leſs pleaſing

" to the ear, or leſs diſtinct in their ſigni-
" fication, I have familiariſed the terms of
" philoſophy, by applying them to popular
" ideas."

ADDISON.

I ſhall only obſerve upon all this, that if ſuch terms as tortuoſity, exacerbation, paucity, frigorific *, and a thouſand others of the ſame fantaſtic ſtamp, may entitle an author to preſume that he has refined his native language, your title to ſuch preſumption is clear and undiſputed.

JOHNSON.

Are not ſuch terms elegant and expreſſive?

* And yet the writer who could make uſe of ſuch words, ſo far forgets himſelf, as to apologiſe in the following manner: " If I ſhould ſometimes ſeem obſcure, may it be im-
" puted to a deſire of avoiding that offence which is always
" given by unuſual words." *Rambler*, No. lxxxvi.

ADDISON.

They are affected: and that ſingle charge deſtroys whatever other merit they might have. In any work ſuch language is not agreeable; but in a compoſition deſigned for general uſe, which may be ſuppoſed to be in every hand, it is unſufferably abſurd. It is not every perſon who will chuſe to ſit with your Dictionary by his ſide, to envelope the obſcurity of difficult terms.

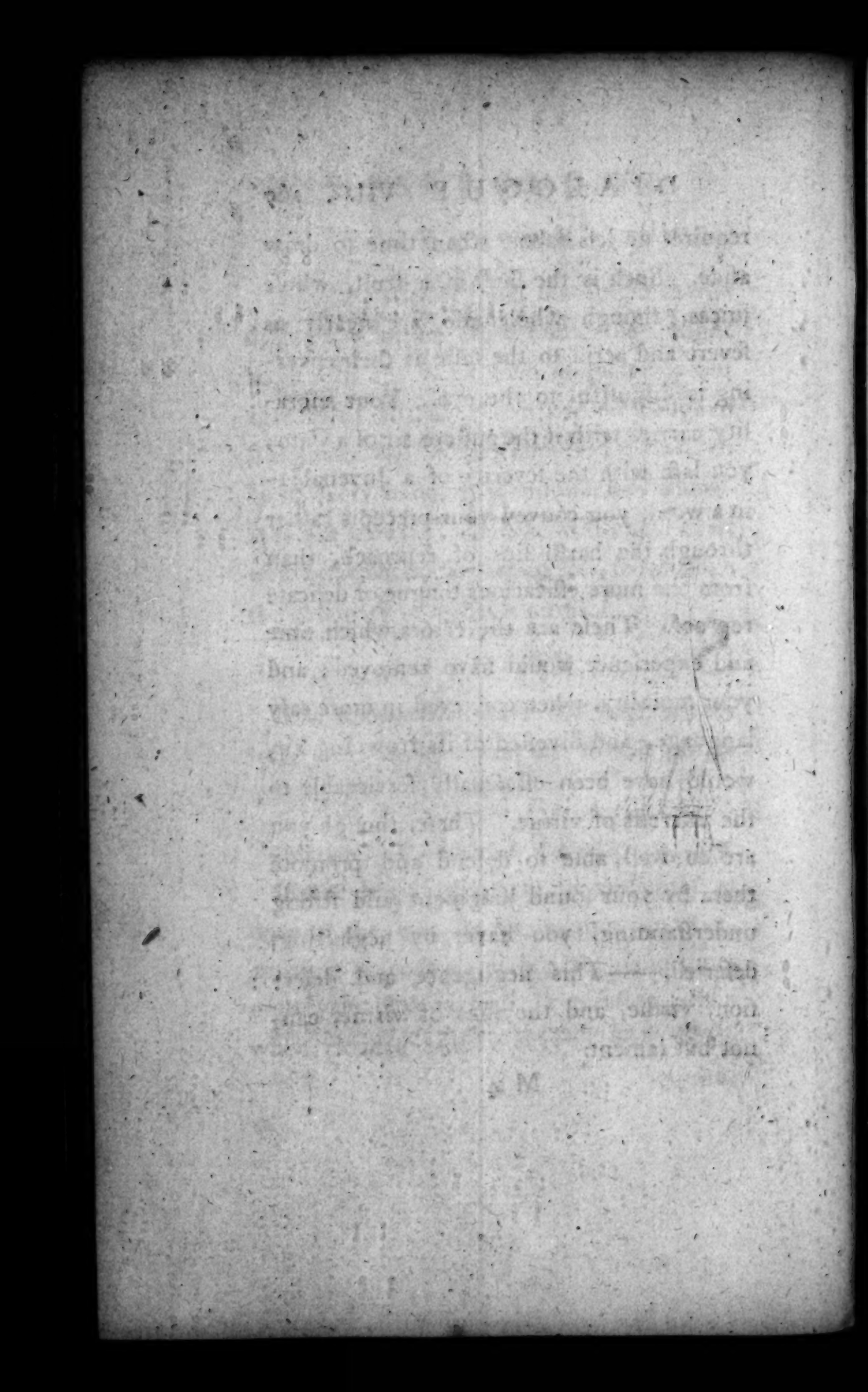
JOHNSON.

The diamond beneath the rugged outſide, will amply repay the trouble of removing the incruſtation.

ADDISON.

True: but if the gem be preſented at once to the eye, in all its pure and ray-emitting ſplendour, it is a thouſand times more valuable, as well as pleaſing, than when clouded with a rugged veil, which requires

requires no leſs labour than time to draw aſide. Such is the ſhell of a fruit, whoſe juices, though wholeſome, are nearly as ſevere and acrid to the taſte as their covering is diſguſtful to the eye. Your morality carries with it the auſtere air of a Cato; you laſh with the ſeverity of a Juvenal;—in a word, you convey your precepts rather through the harſh lips of reproach, than from the more efficacious tongue of delicate reproof. Theſe are the errors which time and experience would have removed; and your morality, when conveyed in more eaſy language, and diveſted of its frowning air, would have been effectually ſerviceable to the intereſts of virtue. Theſe, though you are ſo well able to defend and promote them by your ſound judgment and ſtrong underſtanding, you have, by neglecting, deſerted.——This negligence and deſertion, virtue, and the ſons of virtue, cannot but lament.



DIALOGUE VIII.

ARCHBISHOP LANGTON—EDWARD GIBBON, ESQ.

MR. GIBBON.

"SUCH is the connection between the "throne and the altar, that the banner "of the church has very ſeldom been ſeen "on the ſide of the people *."

ARCHBISHOP LANGTON.

You did well, Sir, to ſoften, in ſome degree, the unjuſtifiable aſſertion by the words *very ſeldom*.—But I will arrange your tuneful period more juſtly in the ſtrain of truth;

* Hiſtory of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, p. 60.

and

and adviſe you to pronounce, that "what-
"ever be the connection between the throne
"and the altar, the banner of the church
"has often been ſeen on the ſide of the
"people."

MR. GIBBON.

Whence, and what!——But I know no diſcompoſure. Like "the ſages of Greece "and Rome, I remain unmoved by an "awful ſpectacle, and, as if I were uncon-"ſcious of any alterations in the phyſical "world," by your appearance.—Whoever you are, therefore, I converſe with you as man with man; and inform you, that ſuppoſing your alteration juſt and true, to have inſerted it would have deſtroyed the intention——

ARCHBISHOP LANGTON.

What intention?—To lower the church in the eyes of your readers, is all the end which

which ſuch reflections—but (to uſe your own words) "I will not preſs too cloſely "the myſterious language*" of a writer who does not chuſe openly to profeſs himſelf an enemy to religion, however he may, by feeble arguments, and by unneceſſary conceſſions (made with feigned reluctance) to the invented accuſations of nameleſs enemies, betray the ſacred cauſe.

MR. GIBBON.

I underſtand you not: at firſt your purpoſe ſeemed to be, to defend the church from the imputation of ſiding with tyranny; now you extend your views, and ſpeak with warmth on the ſubject of religion, as if you intended a defence *there*, where no attack was made.

* P. 470.

ARCH-

ARCHBISHOP LANGTON.

Ill would it ſuit the purpoſe of my viſit, and the end would be utterly unworthy of the means, if I came only to defend the political conduct of the profeſſors of religion, whom yet you have accuſed unjuſtly. But there is a higher and more generous deſign in this appearance, which I am ſuffered to make, in order to (try at leaſt to) convince you, that you have depreciated the Chriſtian religion unjuſtly. In what inſtances will appear in the courſe of our converſation—at preſent let me advert to that ſubject which firſt introduced it—and remind you, that "the banners of the church "were diſplayed on the ſide of the people" in the reign of king John; when, by *my* advice and encouragement, the people of England aſſerted their liberties, and Magna Charta

Charta was obtained from the hand of an unrelenting and unwilling tyrant.

MR. GIBBON.

By Langton, then, I am honoured with this unuſual addreſs:—be your aſſertion granted. "In an age of ſuperſtition, the "influence of the clergy might be uſefully "employed to aſſert the rights of man-"kind *;"—but in more enlightened centuries, when men were freed from the chains of ſuperſtition, ſuch inſtances will not readily be found.

ARCHBISHOP LANGTON.

Not readily! What do you think of the noble ſtand for liberty, made by the biſhops and clergy againſt the arbitrary proceedings of James the Second?

* P. 60.

MR.

MR. GIBBON.

Sure you forget your character—A popiſh archbiſhop applaud the meaſures of thoſe who reſiſted papal tyranny!—How inconſiſtent!—

ARCHBISHOP LANGTON.

When you conſider me, as a moment's reflection will direct you to do, the ſeeming inconſiſtency will vaniſh at once:—but be that as it may—theſe two noble inſtances (from which all your preſent liberties are derived) may ſuffice to prove the injuſtice of your remark on the conſequences of the connection between the church and the altar. I leave, therefore, your political, and turn to your religious, opinions; which, though they afford a larger ſcope to objection, are yet more difficult to be aſſaulted; as they, in general, chuſe not to appear in

open day, but caſt into ſhades, and viſible only in profile. Such, for inſtance, is your ſtrong aſſertion, that the ſcripture account of the fertility and plenty of the Holy Land is abſolutely falſe.

MR. GIBBON.

An aſſertion like this, methinks, is ſufficiently plain; here are no ſhades, nor does it appear in profile, but in full face:—unfortunately, however, it is an aſſertion which I never made.

ARCHBISHOP LANGTON.

Not, indeed, in ſo many words, but by the directeſt inference imaginable; and your reader muſt be ſtrangely inattentive who does not make it. What, Sir, is your opinion of Phœnicia and Paleſtine?

MR.

MR. GIBBON.

" The former was a narrow and rocky " coaſt, and the latter was a territory " ſcarcely ſuperior to Wales either in fer- " tility or extent *."

ARCHBISHOP LANGTON.

And yet this latter is the land which the ſcripture repreſents in ſtrong terms of " a land flowing with milk and honey †."

* P. 25.

† It may not be worth while to enter upon a diſcuſſion of the extent of the Holy Land, becauſe the Scripture has not preciſely determined its exact limits, as it has poſitively declared its fertility; yet, as Mr. G. has hinted aſtoniſhment, that religion ſhould be promulgated from ſo contracted and ſmall a ſpot, he may be directed, in the words of Milton, to conſider,

——" that great,
" Or bright, infers not excellence; the earth,
" Though in compariſon of heav'n, ſo ſmall,
" Nor glift'ring, may of ſolid good contain
" More plenty than the ſun."——

Paradiſe Loſt, b. viii. v. 90.

MR.

MR. GIBBON.

Is it not now ſuch as I have deſcribed?

ARCHBISHOP LANGTON.

Not even *now* is it ſo barren as you have painted it; but allowing it were, you need not be told what a change time and oppreſſion will make in the ſoil of an haraſſed and neglected country.

MR. GIBBON.

Was it not ſuch at the time of which I wrote?

ARCHBISHOP LANGTON.

It was not:—though it had loſt much of its ancient fertility, it even then produced in abundance the fruits of the earth. It had not loſt that plenty which enabled it to ſupply the luxurious cities of Tyre and Sidon; and which Tacitus*, the author

* Hiſtor. l. v.

whom you ſo juſtly admire, would have informed you, made it deſervedly called a *fertile country, where corn and fruits were exuberant as in Italy* *. If at that time it merited ſuch a deſcription, what reaſon is there to doubt the aſſertion of Moſes reſpecting its fertility and plenty?—But Tacitus may, it ſeems, be occaſionally overlooked, provided the imputation of falſehood can, covertly, and with ſeeming inattention †, be fixed upon a more venerable name. The

* The words of Tacitus are remarkable:—"Uber ſolum: *exuberant* fruges *noſtram in morem*: the word "exuberant" conveys nearly the ſame idea as the ſcriptural expreſſion of *overflowing*. And ſurely the words *noſtram in morem* convey an high idea of fertility, if we may believe Virgil's beautiful panegyric upon Italy.

——neque Medorum ſylvæ, ditiſſima terra,
Nec pulcher Ganges, atque auro turbidus Hermus,
Laudibus Italiæ certent, &c. &c. *Georg.* ii.

† It is remarkable, that this oblique ſtroke at the veracity of Scripture is introduced in a diffuſe detail of the provinces of the Roman empire, where it might leaſt have been expected, and where it might moſt be ſuppoſed to have been inſerted without deſign.

preſent *now* is the only ſeaſon in the annals of time, which bears the leaſt reſemblance to the deſcription you have given; and even that reſemblance is but faint—while all preceding æras contradict, in the ſtrongeſt terms, your bold and inſidious aſſertion.

MR. GIBBON.

Theſe, however, are errors (if errors they muſt be deemed) merely hiſtorical, and therefore venial.

ARCHBISHOP LANGTON.

If they had no worſe tendency than to offend againſt the truth of hiſtory, they are ſcarcely venial in a writer of your acknowledged accuracy and diligence.

MR. GIBBON.

Be they venial or not, I beg that we may leave them; for there is yet left behind a

ſeverer accuſation againſt me, namely, that "I have depreciated the Chriſtian religion." You added the word, *unjuſtly*. Moſt unqueſtionably, if I have depreciated Chriſtianity at all, it muſt be unjuſtly; for ſuch is my veneration for our moſt holy religion——

ARCHBISHOP LANGTON.

Forbear your profeſſions, and let us attend to proofs.—What will naturally firſt preſent itſelf to our conſideration is, that general air of unfriendly friendſhip, that Δωρον αδωρον, which runs through the whole of your account of the progreſs of the Chriſtian religion:—particular paſſages of injuſtice and miſrepreſentation will occur as we proceed. If, in conſequence of what I ſay, you ſhew your conviction by a juſter train of thinking, and a fairer courſe of argument in the ſequel of your work, which, I ſee, you are

are now preparing, my viſit will then be not in vain.

MR. GIBBON.

As my heart is not barred againſt conviction, the conſequences muſt depend upon the force your arguments carry with them. But how does it appear that I maſk enmity under the diſguiſe of friendſhip? for that, I ſuppoſe, is what you mean by the Δωρα αδωρα of Sophocles—a proverb which I cannot allow to be applied to me, upon your mere aſſertion.

ARCHBISHOP LANGTON.

When an inquirer into the progreſs of any religion dwells with viſible pleaſure upon the faults of its firſt profeſſors, paints them in glowing and animated colours, expoſes with a really ready, though affectedly reluctant, hand, their follies and their weak-

neſſes; when he lowers the converts in the eyes of his readers, as the meaneſt and vileſt of rabble; when he oppoſes that religion with ſeemingly ſtrong objections, and anſwers them with really weak arguments; —when ſuch is the inquirer's conduct, will you, can you deem him, with truth, a friend to that religion?

MR. GIBBON.

Certainly not: but have I done all this?

ARCHBISHOP LANGTON.

You have: and more than all this. Why, but for the pleaſure of dwelling upon faults and expoſing weakneſſes, are both exhibited with ſuch frequent care and critical caution? Why was the flaming zeal of the ſtern Tertullian* drawn from its obſcurity? Why was it given us in its horrid

* P. 474.

colours—

colours—not in *all* its horrid colours indeed, becauſe you have contrived to heighten the terror of the picture, by affecting to draw that veil over a part, with which you ought rather to have covered the whole? Why was the obſcure narrative of Agläe* held out to the light? Was it the only Chriſtian anecdote worth preſerving? Could you find pleaſure in relating none but ſuch a pitiful and ambiguous tale as this? Why are the firſt Chriſtians ſo very carefully pointed at as the dregs of the populace—as beggars and ſlaves? Why——

MR. GIBBON.

Permit me to interrupt you in the torrent of your queſtions. In whatever light my repreſentation of theſe things may appear, I thought, and ſtill think, it aroſe very naturally in the courſe of my inquiry;—

* P. 578.

and whether I took pleaſure in the picture or not, it will at leaſt be allowed, that the likeneſs is juſt, and that the hand of truth guided my ſteady pencil.

ARCHBISHOP LANGTON.

We will leave, then, the points of friendſhip and pleaſure, to attend to that of truth. Now, ſuppoſing the utmoſt that juſtice will allow us to ſuppoſe; and granting, that many inſtances of the weakneſs (or wickedneſs, if you will) of the firſt Chriſtians were perfectly true—what, after all, does this prove? It proves no more than the frailty of human nature, and that the proſelytes of Chriſtianity were liable to error. But not the leaſt ſtain can it caſt on that divine religion itſelf; which, though it may exalt and purify the mind, does not convert men into angels. But, indeed, in many of the repreſentations which you have given, and in many of the aſſertions you have thrown

out,

out, you have greatly misrepresented, or, at least, mistaken facts. It is not fact, for instance, that the first converted Christians were "beggars and slaves, the dregs of "the earth."

MR. GIBBON.

You surely forget: it is not I who style them so; "it was the charge of malice "and infidelity *."

ARCHBISHOP LANGTON.

I grant it: and you retail the charge with most distinct particularity; you say, indeed, that "the unfavourable picture, by "its dark colouring and distorted features, "betrays the hand of an enemy:"—but how faintly do you endeavour to cast the light of truth upon it, and to give its just and well-proportioned form! Your answer to the charge is not given with half the

* P. 514.

glowing

glowing vivacity which ſparkled in your ſtyle when you held the accuſation out to view.

MR. GIBBON.

Perhaps it is not; but you will conſider the embarraſſment I was under from "the "exceptions being either too few in num- "ber, or too recent in time, intirely to "remove the imputation of ignorance and "obſcurity *."

ARCHBISHOP LANGTON.

Intirely to remove it!—When we call to mind the noble aſſurances of the word of truth, "that not many wiſe men after the "fleſh, not many mighty, not many noble, "are called; but God hath choſen the "fooliſh things of the world to confound "the wiſe, and God hath choſen the weak

* P. 515.

"things

" things of the world to confound the things " which are mighty *,"—we are naturally induced to join in the triumphant expoſtulation of the apoſtle; " Where is the wiſe? Where is " the ſcribe? Where is the diſputer of this " world? Hath not God made fooliſh the " wiſdom of this world †?" Supported by theſe aſſurances, we wiſh not " intirely, not " at all, to remove the imputation of ig- " norance and obſcurity," only to ſoften the aſperity of the terms in which it is delivered by the hand of a *friend*; an aſperity which ſeems to aſſiſt and direct the weapon of malice aimed at the vitals of Chriſtianity.

MR. GIBBON.

You do well to mention the confeſſion of St. Paul; for " the lower we depreſs the " temporal condition of the firſt Chriſtians, " the more reaſon we ſhall find to admire

* 1 Cor. i. 26, 27. † 1 Cor. i. 20.

" their

" their merit and ſucceſs:"—and indeed " we ſtand in need of ſuch reflections to " comfort us for the loſs of ſome illuſtrious " characters, which, in our eyes, might " have ſeemed the moſt worthy of the " heavenly preſent. The names of Se- " neca, of the Elder and Younger Pliny, " of Tacitus, of Plutarch, of Galen, and of " the ſlave Epictetus, and of the emperor " Marcus Antoninus, adorn the age in " which they flouriſhed, and exalt the dig- " nity of human nature. They filled with " glory their reſpective ſtations, either in " active or contemplative life; their ex- " cellent underſtandings were improved " by ſtudy; philoſophy had purified their " minds from the prejudices of the popular " ſuperſtition; and their days were ſpent in " the purſuit of truth, and in the practice " of virtue. Yet all theſe ſages (it is no " leſs an object of ſurpriſe than concern)

" over-

" overlooked or rejected the perfection of
" the Chriſtian ſyſtem. Their language or
" their ſilence equally diſcover their con-
" tempt for the growing ſect, which, in
" their time, had diffuſed itſelf over the
" Roman empire. Thoſe among them who
" condeſcend to mention the Chriſtians,
" conſider them only as obſtinate and per-
" verſe enthuſiaſts, who exacted an im-
" plicit ſubmiſſion to their myſterious doc-
" trines, without being able to produce a
" ſingle argument that could engage the at-
" tention of men of ſenſe and learning *."

ARCHBISHOP LANGTON.

Oh, Siren ſtrains!—which " make the
" worſe appear the better reaſon!" With what enthuſiaſtic warmth have you dwelt upon theſe philoſophic characters, ſelected with delicate preciſion!—But why this ſtu-

* P. 516.

died

died attention? why this diligent care to paint the loſs of theſe worthies to the Chriſtian cauſe? Why are your groans poured forth with ſuch pathetic energy?—It ſhould ſeem as if the burden were far too heavy for the *comfort you ſo much ſtood in need of* to alleviate. Alas, Sir! this may be the caſe with minds where prejudice bears the ſway; but to ſuch as are ruled by truth and reaſon, the ſatisfaction ariſing from the apoſtle's forcible argument, weighs infinitely heavier in the balance, and the philoſophic loſs *up flies and kicks the beam.* You have, it is true, ſelected men of note and eminence in the heathen world, and you have painted their characters in all the luxuriance of commendation; but, unhappily, upon one of them you have, with your own hand, fixed an indelible ſtigma, which proves him more worthy of every honeſt man's contempt, than of "the heavenly preſent."

" preſent." Seneca *, the philoſophic Seneca, condeſcended to compoſe a " juſtifi-" cation of the ſon and aſſaſſin of Agrippi-" na." And yet this is the man, whom, when Chriſtianity is to be depreciated, you could repreſent, " as ſpending his days in " the purſuit of truth and practice of vir-" tue."—The very man, who could calmly ſit down to pen a ſtudied apology for that monſter who imbrued his hands in his mother's blood, and whoſe " prudence and " humanity †" (what a proſtitution of words to ſuch a character!) you have on another occaſion thought proper to commend.—But allowing Seneca and the others,

* P. 138.

† P. 533. Mr. Gibbon takes particular pains to exalt the character of Nero, and exculpate him from the accuſation of ſetting fire to Rome:—but Tacitus (whom again Mr. G. thinks proper to overlook) fixes the ſuſpicion on Nero in very ſtrong terms indeed——Alii " palam faces jaciebant, " atque *eſſe ſibi auctorem* vociferabantur." And again, " juſ-" ſum incendium crederetur." *Ann.* lib. xv.

and

and a thouſand more, to be ſuch as your warm imagination and flowing pen deſcribe them, we may be charitably concerned, but cannot wonder at their unhappy neglect.

MR. GIBBON.

To me "it is no leſs an object of ſurpriſe than of concern."

ARCHBISHOP LANGTON.

Why ſurpriſe? Was it not foretold, that ſuch would be the reception which the doctrine of the Croſs would meet with among the diſputers of this world—*to the Greeks, fooliſhneſs?* Your parenthetical concern, then, may ariſe from Chriſtian charity, but your ſurpriſe muſt be merely affectation;—for nothing can ſurpriſe which is not unexpected. But ſurely you much miſtake the Chriſtian character (you, or the authority you ſpeak from), when you repreſent the Chriſt-

tians as "obſtinate enthuſiaſts, who exacted "an implicit ſubmiſſion to their myſterious "doctrines." If this was their practice, how ſtrangely did it deviate from the precept of the apoſtle, who directed them to "prove all things, but hold faſt that which "was good*!" An implicit ſubmiſſion to truths unproved, is here neither exacted nor expected; all things were firſt to be proved: then, indeed, an unremitting ſteadineſs and reſolution to hold faſt the truth, was ſtrenuouſly enforced and practiſed.—But it ſeems the Chriſtians, if they had been inclined to explain their doctrines, "were not "able to bring a ſingle argument that could "engage the attention of men of ſenſe and "learning."—How improbable this, and, in fact, how falſe!—Improbable, that they ſhould not be able to engage the attention of men of ſenſe and learning in the primitive

* 1 Theſſ. v. 21.

O times,

times, when the attention, and the hearts too, of *Boyle*, and *Locke*, and *Newton*, with thouſands of others—" men of ſenſe and " learning"—were attracted and engaged by them in more diſtant centuries;—and falſe, when many eminent men, whom you have named, and many more whom you have not named, were amongſt the early converts; when *Dionyſius* the Areopagite, whom we may, without breach of probability, ſuppoſe poſſeſſed of both ſenſe and learning, embraced the doctrine of truth on the firſt preaching of an apoſtle at Athens. But becauſe the ſages who appeared in your eyes " as moſt worthy of the heavenly pre-" ſent," rejected it, ſhall it therefore be urged, with any ſhadow of juſtice, that Chriſtianity could not engage the attention of men of ſenſe and learning?

MR. GIBBON.

I muſt ſtill recur to my original plea, that not I, but the enemies of Chriſtianity, bring theſe charges againſt it.

ARCHBISHOP LANGTON.

By repeating the charges with the minuteſt care, by giving them without the anſwers which were then returned (—indeed, by your manner, one would ſuppoſe none *were* returned,—at leaſt, none ſuch as "could engage the attention of men of "ſenſe and learning"—), and which you might have given from the ſame author who furniſhed you with the calumnies of the enemies of Chriſtianity,—you, in reality, make the body of accuſations *your own* —dum recitas, incipit eſſe tuus.——You are much indebted to Minutius Felix, an author of accuracy and elegance, for a large col-

lection of objections againſt Chriſtianity, and of calumnies on the morals of its profeſſors. The ſame ingenious author has returned juſt and ſpirited anſwers to "theſe "charges of malice and infidelity." Why you expoſed the one, and paſſed over the other;—or why, when you condeſcended to mention any of the anſwers, you did it ſlightly and tranſiently;—why you choſe to

Juſt hint a fault, and heſitate diſlike,

your own heart muſt beſt inform you; ſuch conduct can, however, at beſt be allowed to bear no favourable aſpect to the Chriſtian cauſe. You may, perhaps, be convinced, that my obſervation is juſt, by the following inſtance out of many. Your words are, "Theſe obſcure teachers are as "mute in public, as they are loquacious and "dogmatical in private." Into theſe words (ſuch is your happy art) you have certainly

infuſed the elegance and ſpirit of the original Latin; for they are an expreſſive tranſlation of "latebroſa et lucifugax natio, in publicum muta, in angulis garrula *."—In the anſwer which you affect to give to this imputation, you only attempt to clear the Chriſtians from that part of it which relates to their meanneſs and obſcurity;—and even that attempt is ſo faint and feeble, as if you wiſhed it not to ſucceed;—but you ſay not a word to defend them from the charge "of being mute in "public, and loquacious in private." This you are content to ſuffer to paſs unnoticed, as if it were too true to be contradicted or diſproved; but the ſame elegant author declares, that the Chriſtians were with the higheſt injuſtice ſtyled "loquacious in pri"vate," as their "adverſaries were either

* Min. Fel. cap. viii. Edit. Davis.

" aſhamed or afraid to attend to them in " public *."

MR. GIBBON.

If in the courſe of my inquiry into the reaſons of the growth of Chriſtianity, which I profeſs to make " with becoming ſubmiſ- " ſion †," ſome unfavourable circumſtances ſhould preſent themſelves to view, the fault lies not with me. The cauſe of truth——

ARCHBISHOP LANGTON.

The Chriſtian cauſe, Sir, is the cauſe of truth. But that ſacred cauſe may be ſo diſtorted by the pencil of prejudice and miſ-repreſentation, as to appear in a very different form from its nature and real lovelineſs, to thoſe eyes which view it through ſo de-

* Nec in angulis garruli ſi audire nos publicè, aut erubeſcetis, aut timetis. *Min. Felix Oct.* cap. xxxi. Edit. Davis.

† P. 450.

deitful a medium. Your book now lies open before us; I will point to you a few more paſſages which are preſented to the view of the reader through this deceitful medium.— "A *myſterious* veil was caſt over the infan- "cy of the church."—"It protected the "Chriſtians not only from the malice, but "the *knowledge* of the heathen world."— "The new ſect carefully concealed, or faint- "ly announced its future greatneſs and "*ambition*."—"The firſt Chriſtians were "protected by *ignorance* and *contempt* *."— There are in theſe paſſages, words which convey a very unfavourable idea of Chriſtianity, and they are interſperſed with ſeeming undeſign; but when they are conſidered with an impartial eye, they will appear to be the arts of prejudice and miſrepreſentation, diſguiſing the genuine beauty, and weakening the force of truth and pure religion.

* P. 530.

MR. GIBBON.

Theſe things appear very differently to me. I will take notice, however, of only one of your inſtances. Surely I have proved, "that the heathen world had no know-"ledge of the infant ſect of Chriſtians."

ARCHBISHOP LANGTON.

One would ſuppoſe, from your account, that the life of the great Author of Chriſtianity had been paſſed in ſilence and obſcurity; and that the doctrines he delivered were confined to the ſmall circle of ſome obſcure village. But "this thing was not "done in a corner." The heathen world muſt have had knowledge (whatever uſe they choſe to make of it) even of the firſt promulgation of Chriſtianity by the Redeemer of mankind, who diſpenſed it only in the province of Judæa.—But Athens, Epheſus,

Epheſus, and Rome, were made acquainted with it by the labours of the apoſtles; and Agrippa, a friend and favourite of the Roman emperor, heard Chriſtianity preached from the lips of St. Paul, and was nearly perſuaded to declare himſelf a convert, at the very firſt diſcourſe of the eloquent apoſtle. Is it to be conceived, that neither Agrippa, nor his numerous attendants, ever took further notice, or converſed among their friends of Rome and Italy, of this extraordinary defence of Paul, and its forcible effect upon his royal hearer?

MR. GIBBON.

Perhaps ſuch ſtupid, inſenſible ſilence is not to be ſuppoſed;—but will you not allow me to urge, that this account is given by St. Luke,—a friend,—a diſciple,—a Chriſtian?

ARCH-

ARCHBISHOP LANGTON.

Yes, moſt certainly: urge it as forcibly as you pleaſe;—you cannot mean this hint as a plea to invalidate the teſtimony of the hiſtorian, whoſe veracity you have yourſelf tacitly allowed, by quoting an anecdote, which, I will venture to ſay, you will no where find but in the *Acts of the Apoſtles* *. St. Luke acquaints us with the conduct of Gallio; and, from *his authority* †, you have informed us, in terms of high admiration, in what manner the provincial governors behaved to the primitive Chriſtians.

MR. GIBBON.

St. Luke mentions this prudent conduct of the governors of Judæa ‡, in more places than one; and I cannot but think it pru-

* Acts xviii. 14, 15, 16.
† P. 531.
‡ Acts xxiii. 29. xxv. 19.

dent

dent conduct; I cannot but think that they acted with great propriety: it certainly "was beneath the majeſty of Rome ſe-"riouſly to diſcuſs the obſcure differences "which might ariſe amongſt a barbarous "and ſuperſtitious people."

ARCHBISHOP LANGTON.

With what an air of contempt and inſulting ridicule was that ſentence delivered! And yet, Sir, theſe provincial governors, and their imperial directors, very ſoon after, did not think it beneath the majeſty of Rome, to perſecute with the cruelleſt tortures thoſe whom now to overlook is with you a ground of commendation.—Is their perſecution praiſe-worthy as well as their forbearance?

MR. GIBBON.

I will not ſay that; and humanity muſt confeſs, that the change was to be lamented:

ed:—but, at the ſame time, truth muſt allow, that the number of the martyrs was amazingly exaggerated.

ARCHBISHOP LANGTON.

What induces you to think ſo?

MR. GIBBON.

Surely it is not unreaſonable to conclude, that paſſion, prejudice, and inflamed declamation might give a very unjuſt and unlimited account of the number of martyrs; eſpecially ſince ſuch a concluſion may be corroborated by ſtubborn facts, from which the cool and ſteady pen of an unbiaſſed hiſtorian may prove the number not to have exceeded two thouſand.

ARCHBISHOP LANGTON.

Undoubtedly human nature is every where the ſame; and an eccleſiaſtical hiſtorian, while the blood of the martyrs was

even

even yet ſtreaming, and while his heart was yet deeply affected with the ſufferings of his fellow-chriſtians for that ſacred cauſe in which he himſelf had ſo large an intereſt; ſuch an hiſtorian, I ſay, might naturally expreſs himſelf in ſtrong terms; terms, which may ſeem to increaſe the army of martyrs beyond what a writer who lives fifteen hundred years after,—who may have no intereſt at all in the ſucceſs of Chriſtianity, and who ſets about the inquiry with all the unfeeling rigour of demonſtrative preciſion—will, perhaps, allow. It is very poſſible, that if ſuch an hiſtorian were to engage in the taſk, he might accompliſh it with ſome appearance of *uſeleſs* ſucceſs. You, Sir, have given us *your* calculation in the full formality of arithmetical exactneſs; —but to what end this learned labour?— Chriſtianity is fixed on the ſame immoveable foundation (even allowing all you ſay upon

upon the ſubject) whether two, or two thouſand, or a million, ſuffered death in its cauſe.

MR. GIBBON.

True: but from hence appears a "melancholy truth, which will obtrude itſelf "on the *reluctant* mind; that even admitting, without heſitation or inquiry, "all that hiſtory has recorded, or *devotion* "*has feigned*, on the ſubject of martydoms, "it muſt ſtill be acknowledged, that the "Chriſtians, in the courſe of their inteſtine "diſſentions, have inflicted far greater ſeverities on each other, than they had experienced from the zeal of infidels *."

ARCHBISHOP LANGTON.

"Devotion has feigned!"—What an extraordinary combination of terms! But let

* P. 585.

the

the ſtrange expreſſion paſs. I aſſure you, Sir, there are to whom this melancholy tale (ſuch is their hatred to the Chriſtian cauſe) conveys no melancholy idea; nor do the minds receive the information with the leaſt *reluctance*. But unfortunately for ſuch minds, and happily for the Chriſtian cauſe, the horrid tale is NOT TRUE.

MR. GIBBON.

How! not true!—Then is there no faith in hiſtory.

ARCHBISHOP LANGTON.

I will not keep you a moment in ſuſpenſe: —if every ſyllable of the ſhocking murders, which you take ſuch pains to recount, were true, I declare to you, in the ſtrongeſt terms, that whoever acted the ſeverities you ſpeak of, were NO CHRISTIANS. It has been well obſerved, "that if the precepts of the

"Chriſtian

"Chriſtian religion were faithfully follow-
"ed, if every individual in every nation
"were a Chriſtian indeed, all war and injuſ-
"tice would be unknown amongſt them."
Whoever, therefore, were guilty of ſuch behaviour as you attribute to Chriſtians, were, I aſſure you, utterly unworthy of that ſacred name. They, from a deſire of ſcreening their wickedneſs under a ſpecious maſk, might call themſelves Chriſtians; and you, for reaſons beſt known to yourſelf, may dignify them with that holy appellation; but neither they could, nor will you, oppoſe with truth this juſt aſſertion, that they acted in direct contradiction to the will of that religion, of which they improperly ſtyled themſelves diſciples. Let the black ſtain, then, of perſecution remain, where it ought only to be fixed—on the perſecutors themſelves;—and let it not, by calling them *Chriſtians*, be fixed on their religion, of which they were not worthy.

MR.

MR. GIBBON.

The conſequences of this reflection may ſeem to glance where you appear to ſuppoſe them directed. But it cannot be imagined, that I intended they ſhould wound Chriſtianity itſelf; for I have ſtyled the ſyſtem which theſe perſecutors defended with ſuch ſavage zeal, "the fabric of ſuperſtition, "which the biſhops of the imperial city "had erected."

ARCHBISHOP LANGTON.

I pretend not to ſay what your intention was;—the conſequences of your aſſertions, however, are ſufficiently obvious. But it is not intirely unworthy of remark, that if you ſtyle the biſhops of Rome architects of ſuperſtition, you take care to call their opponents "a ſet of daring fanatics, who aſ-"ſumed the popular character of reform-

" ers." Be this, however, as it may, I ſhall now conclude my viſit, already, perhaps, too long; but not before I have beſtowed that encomium on your work, which is its real due: there is an eaſe and elegance in your ſtyle, a captivating ſweetneſs in your manner, a ſmooth and pleaſing turn of your periods, ſcarcely to be met with in any other author; and in every page there ſparkles that brilliancy of genius (however miſapplied) that delights in a high degree every reader of ſenſibility.—How aſtoniſhing, then, is it, that a genius like yours could chuſe to wander in ſuch barren deſarts, as the reigns of the latter emperors afford to the eye!—that you could ſubmit to the drudgery of copying, tranſlating, and embelliſhing the confuſed narrations of the Auguſtan hiſtory!—I think I may venture to pronounce, that you never would have done it, but for the ſake of introducing

your two concluding chapters, which, artfully and unawares *, ſlide upon the incautious reader, and preſent him with that ſcene of infidelity, to view which only, it appears that he was dragged (for in ſpite of all the animated efforts of your uncommon genius, the reader does often move heavily along) through the deſolate and barbarous hiſtory of brutal monſters. And was this worthy of you?—Indeed it was not.

But thus the late Mr. Hume †, and thus you have made inſidious attacks upon Chriſtianity:

* Who travel hiſtory in queſt of ſchemes
To govern nations, or, perhaps, oppreſs,
May there ſtart thoughts which other aims inſpire.
Unlike Candace's eunuch, as they read
Unhappy, may turn deiſts on their road,
May be ſurpriſed with worſe than what they ſought,
And *entertain a dæmon unawares.* YOUNG.

† There is a remarkable ſimilarity between theſe two authors. How very like Hume is the following ſentence of Mr. Gibbon, when ſpeaking of the lewdneſs of the Roman

Chriſtianity: and why, Sir, this zeal, why this earneſtneſs to ſubvert that holy religion? What good end can it anſwer? Does the Goſpel teach an Epicurean morality? Does it inculcate malice, covetouſneſs, revenge? In a word, does it encourage vice of any kind? If it did, you could but proſecute it with unremitting zeal. But as it teaches a pure ſyſtem of morals; as it inculcates peace, generoſity, forgiveneſs; as it encourages virtue of every kind, why it is thus inſidiouſly and earneſtly attacked, let the hearts of its enemies declare. But the revilers of Chriſtianity act a prepoſterous part; they endeavour to remove that excellent religion, and attempt to ſubſtitute

tyrants:——"The ſentiments of *honour* and *gallantry* have "introduced a regard for decency, and reſpect for the public "opinion, into the modern courts of Europe." P. 150. This regard for decency, and reſpect for public opinion, which really flows from Chriſtianity, (See Dial. II.) Mr. Gibbon, following Mr. Hume's ſteps, traces from *the ſentiments of honour and gallantry*.

nothing in its room.—At leaſt give the world a purer and more reaſonable rule of life, ere you try to blaſt its deareſt hopes both here and hereafter.

MR. GIBBON.

Till now, I rather doubted the truth of the Platonic notion of ſpirits: but you have confirmed it *. The ſame concerns which might be ſuppoſed to have actuated the ſubſtantial archbiſhop, now affect his unembodied ſhade: had I been thus addreſſed by one whoſe trade it was not——

ARCHBISHOP LANGTON.

Trade!—I ſmile at the freedom of your manner, and pity the error of your opinion. Alas! Sir, in the world of ſpirits, all think alike on the truth and importance

* ——Fuit vivis quæ cura—
—Eadem ſequitur tellure repoſtos.
Virg. Æn. vi.

of Chriſtianity. Conviction there reigns over all. Some indeed "believe and "tremble"—but ALL believe. There, then, no particularities of employment engage, nor motives of intereſt influence, the mind; a reflection which here is often caſt, by diſingenuous deiſts, upon ſuch of the clergy as advance to defend the cauſe of Chriſtianity againſt their attacks; and it is a reflection deemed by them of ſufficient force to induce them to neglect the weightieſt arguments; but how unjuſtly it is ſo deemed, let your *unprejudiced* reaſon judge. All good men are concerned in the intereſts of religion, and all ſuch will defend it—but the defence ſurely comes with double force from the hands of a clergyman; unleſs it will be ſaid, that his reaſons carry *leſs* weight, becauſe he has paid *more* attention to the ſubject. But if this will not be ſaid, it will be urged, "that

"his

" his temporal intereſt is concerned, and " hence his ready defence of religion."—Be it ſo:—allow the *ungenerous* plea: what then? Will he argue more weakly, will he attend to the cauſe more careleſsly? Surely not.—If a man's property is invaded, and litigious people will endeavour to find flaws in the title to his eſtate, will it be urged as a *proof* that his title is therefore *bad*, becauſe he defends it *himſelf?* A Lyttelton, a Weſt, and a Jenyns, have argued with convincing force in the Chriſtian cauſe; but had they been divines, their arguments would not, on that account, have been leſs effectual with minds unprejudiced and open to conviction.

DIALOGUE IX.

CICELY, Duchess of York—— Lady S——.

LADY S.

WHENCE, and what art thou, execrable Shape?

CICELY.

——Knoweſt thou not me?
Not to know me, argues thyſelf unknown!
The meaneſt——

But ah!—I forbear:—alas, for the impotençe of pride!—Yet, ere I addreſs you farther, tell me what there is in my form to occaſion your ſevere exclamation, and juſtify your diſlike.

LADY

LADY S.

It is not your ſudden appearance, it is not the apprehenſion natural to the human mind on ſuch occaſions; but it is a ſomething in your perſon, though adorned with the richneſs and elegance of earthly pomp, which ſhocks my very ſoul in a manner that no deſcription can reach.

CICELY.

I feel your words; and the ſting they give me is part, and a ſevere part, of my penance. Know, then, I was once the mother of two kings, and the grandmother of a queen;—ambition and pride, fierce ambition and unſocial pride, were my crimes and my curſe while on earth, and now the conſequences of them form a part of my puniſhment. It is my doom once in a year to preſent myſelf before an oppoſite, and, by conſequence, an amiable

character

character of my own ſex, to ſuffer the anguiſh of relating my own hiſtory, and drawing my own character, as well as to do painful juſtice to another, by delineating and applauding her virtues. This is the annual ſeaſon, and you, Lady S. are the perſon before whom I am to perform the hateful taſk.

LADY S.

What an unexpected ſcene!—and ah! how little can I deſerve applauſe, who merit ſo little!

CICELY.

Yes—that humility, that unaſſuming ſpirit—oh, how unlike mine, and how piercingly does the contraſt ſtrike me! But to my hated office. I was the daughter of Ralph Neville, Earl of Northumberland, in the ſtormy reign of Henry the Sixth. I was married to Richard Duke of York.

His

His diſmal hiſtory is well known *. After the fatal loſs I ſuffered at Wakefield, I lived to ſee a variety of fortune attend my deſcendants, and, during ſix-and-thirty years that I ſurvived my huſband, enjoyed not one hour of peace or ſatisfaction. Diſappointed ambition preyed upon my heart; and, retiring to my caſtle of Fotheringhay, I exerciſed that pride and inſolence of ſuperiority over my inferiors of the village, which was doubly ſharpened by the reflection that I had it not in my power to extend it over a whole kingdom. In this vain ſtate and impotence of power I lived and died. In the reign of Edward the Sixth, Northumberland pulled down the choir of the church, where my remains were interred. Among the ruins my bones were dug up; and here began a ſcene of torment to me, which I can never fully

* See Shakeſpeare's Henry VI.

deſcribe,

deſcribe, though I am annually obliged to attempt it. My ſpirit was commanded to the ſpot. I ſaw the rude and unhallowed hands of inſolent labourers toſs my diſjointed limbs here and there with ſcorn. With what inſolence of vulgar wit did they examine the ſcroll of indulgence (ah, vain indulgence!) from the pope, for pardon of my ſins, which they found about my neck!—Avaunt, ſlaves! and know that I am—ah, whither does my paſſion hurry me!—*am*, alas, mean and contemptible duſt! Seven years did my deſpiſed or unregarded remains continue expoſed and mouldering among the rank weeds that ſprang up among the broken ruins; and then they were collected and huddled into the earth by a cruel charity, which mixed my bones with thoſe of the low inhabitants of a paltry and deſerted village.

LADY

LADY S.

Oh, would the ſcene were finiſhed!

CICELY.

Would it were!—for to me the moſt painful part of it is yet to come: to applaud exalted virtue, is even more galling than the paſt heart-wounding recital; but the allotted taſk muſt be performed——

——Therefore to thee I ſpeak,
But with no friendly voice, and add thy name,
Oh S—! to tell thee how I hate thy virtues,
That bring to my remembrance from what ſtate
I fell: how glorious once above thy ſphere,
Till pride, and worſe ambition, threw me down.

Your life, then, is a real oppoſite to mine; but ſtill there is a reflection ariſing from a view of it, which will afford a ſavage comfort *(—Evil, be thou my good!—)* to my ſpirit; for your conduct is almoſt ſingular in its variation from mine; and while meekneſs, humility, œconomy, gentleneſs,

and

and charity, fill up the revolving minutes of your time, the generality of women are——but I am not allowed to dwell upon this ſcene; my buſineſs is with you and your ſuperior virtues. To thoſe, however unwillingly, I muſt return, and do them painful, but it ſhall be ſpeedy, juſtice.

In this beautiful ſcene of rural retirement, the largeſt part of the year is ſpent in ſpreading bleſſings around you. Affability and ſweetneſs of diſpoſition diſtinguiſh you among your equals, and attend your extenſive charity among your inferiors. How often have I ſeen (while my heart ſmote me at the ſight) the gentle ſmile of ſoothing condeſcenſion animate your too lovely countenance, and render you an angel of benignity, while you was employed in relieving the wants of a fellow-creature! What a ſight, to obſerve you, who at one time have been the brighteſt ornament of the moſt ſplendid

circle,

circle, at another ſtooping, literally ſtooping, to viſit the habitation of the cottager, enter it with the moſt affable humility, and, by your gentle demeanour, diſpenſe the trueſt and the moſt refined pleaſure to the lowly family! What are all the vanities of life compared with ſuch a ſcene as this, in which you appear with a ſuperior luſtre!—and how does the gay, the young, the beautiful, the giddy ducheſs of ——, though adorned in the height of elegance, while treading the wild round of luxury and diſſipation, ſhrink into nothing, when compared with your gentle ſpirit thus diſperſing the bleſſings of tender charity around you!

In a domeſtic view, a ſpirit like your own will contemplate with rapture your varied virtues. It is your delight to repay the maternal anxieties of an aged parent by the moſt diligent attention——

To

To rock the cradle of declining age,
With lenient arts extend a mother's breath,
Make languor ſmile, and ſmooth the bed of death.

It is your delight to extend that care to your own riſing family, whoſe virgin bloom you tend with the moſt watchful attention; whoſe perſons, indeed, you do not diſregard, but whoſe minds are your firſt concern; a concern which is employed with ſuch exact propriety, as may make them leſs ſenſible of the loſs they ſuffered in their excellent father. Into them you inſtil the pureſt notions of religion, which deſcend upon their minds like the dew of heaven; and by this means will they grow and flouriſh here, till they are tranſplanted into the garden of God. Kindred ſpirits, who have exerted themſelves in the cauſe of virtue, like you, and now reap their everlaſting reward, look down from their heaven with pleaſure on your joint devotions, your ra-

tional converſations, your morning employments, your evening amuſements, your ſummer's pleaſing walks, your winter's ſweet ſociety; in every one of which maternal love rules your guiding heart, filial affection and duty fill their ductile minds, and virtue is the cement that binds your ſacred union;—may it laſt till—— but

Stupidly good, of enmity diſarm'd,
Thoughts, whither have ye led me? with what ſweet
Compulſion thus tranſported me?——

I reſume my former ſelf, and haſten over the remainder of a ſcene whoſe recollection forms my bitter anguiſh.

Your ſaint-like purity, your unfeigned devotion, your ſerene, yet cheerful, temper, your ſweet ſenſibility, your patient reſignation under affliction, your even and thankful enjoyment of proſperity, your numberleſs

numberleſs other excellencies, ſingly ſhed exceſſive brightneſs; but together they form a conſtellation of ſplendid virtues, which charm every ſoul——but ſuch as mine——

Enough: I have given the painful detail, and fly from this hated ſpot.

THE END.

Dialogues of the Dead with the Living